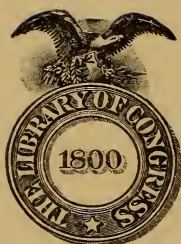


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THE

# CELESTIAL MAGNET.

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BY DAVID B. SLACK.

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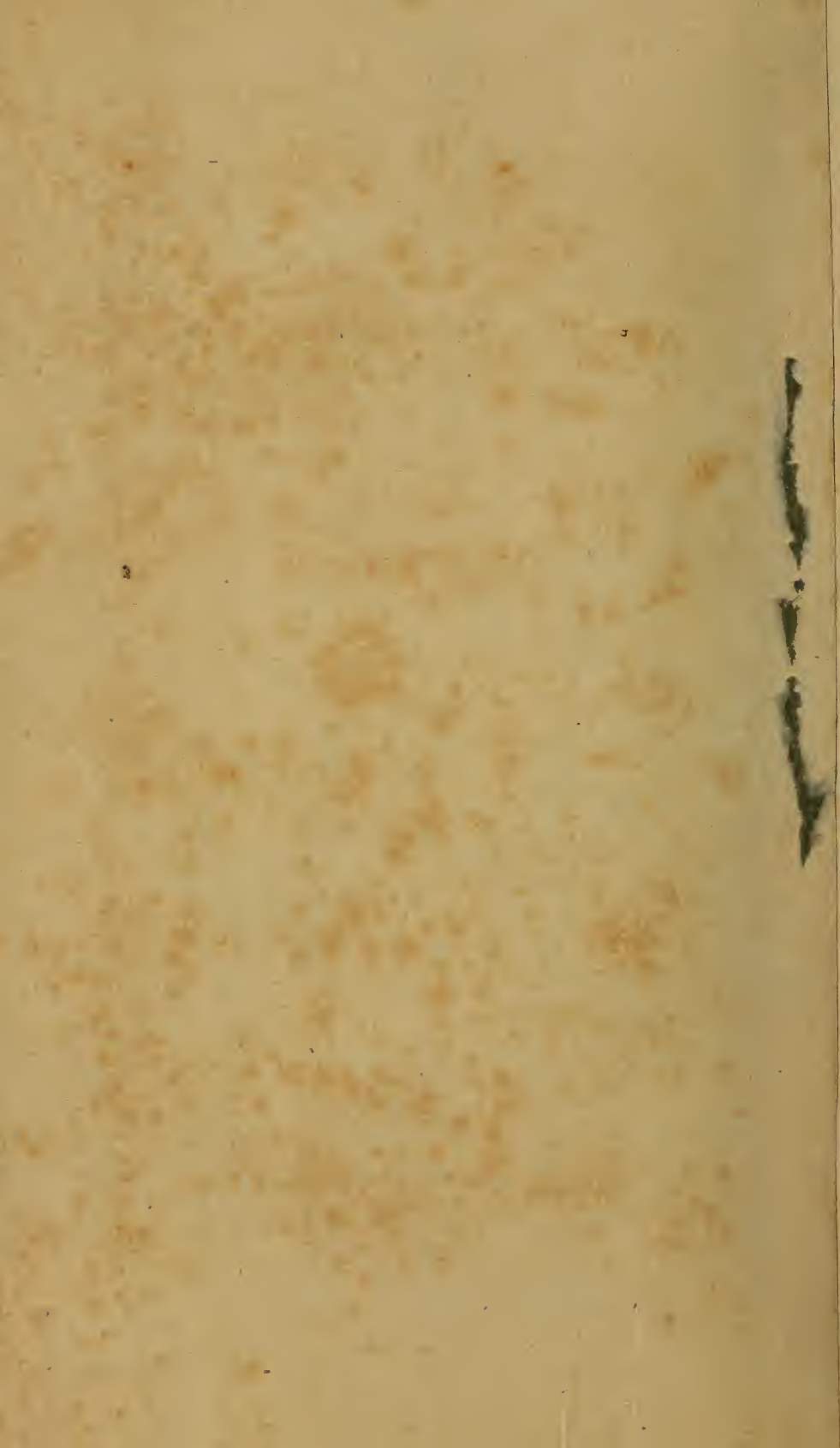
*"That which may be known of God, is manifest in man, for his faith shows it unto him."*

*Note* — The reason for my choosing the title of "Celestial Magnet" to this little pamphlet, will sufficiently appear by its significance of the subject contained in the sequel.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

Printed by Miller & Hutchinson, No. 1, Market-Square, (up stairs.)

1820.



W. H. Greene

THE

CELESTIAL MAGNET.

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BY DAVID B. SLACK.

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## TO THE READER.

For presenting this pamphlet to the publick, I shall make no apology. A full conviction of the truth of its contents, was the only motive, which first prompted me to write it; and which now induces me to give it a publication. Did I, in this instance, follow the example of those, who despise the idea of serving their own generation; and who polish and accommodate their productions to another and more enlightened, of which they think themselves worthy, and regret that they had not been the fortunate enjoyers, I should betray a vanity and presumption of which I hope never to be chargeable.

I am conscious that my age, abilities, and acquirements, would make it vain in me, to attempt a publick discussion of any other subject, than that of religion, the simplest of all things, and in which all mankind are equally concerned. Faithfully to serve my own generation, to endeavour, as far as possible, to ameliorate its suffering condition, to learn its character, and to encourage it in virtue and piety, is the only motive, which has, and I hope ever will induce me to action. It is my sincere wish, that this pamphlet may not reach another generation, either to become an object of imitation or of praise. Instead of serving our common Creator, and affectionate Father, in sincerity and truth, the opinions and systems of one age, have ever been an idol, to charm the fancies, to enlist the

prejudices, and to restrain the piety and devotion of the next ; and hence the service of God becomes a mere offering of the lips and tribute of the tongue. If we wish that peace and good will may prevail on the earth, let every one endeavour, according to his ability, to sweep from existence, that load of authority, which operates like a pestilence upon the present age, and which, if not destroyed, will extend its infection to posterity. Let us not live amid the rubbish of antiquity, while our existence is placed in so enlightened an age as the present. No man is worthy of imitation. God is the only proper object of imitation and praise. With this view of the subject, I enjoy a fearless innocence in offering the result of my reflections to the publick.

And I hope that my Calvinistick friends, many of whom share much of my esteem, will be hereby relieved from that painful anxiety and concern, which they have appeared to manifest for my happiness and welfare ; and rest satisfied that their expectation of my return to their system is wholly without foundation. Undoubtedly they think me guilty of an apostasy. But an apostasy from what ? From the service of my God ! Well might they be concerned were this the case ; but an apostasy of this character, I hope never to be guilty of.

I very well know, that I have apostatised from their system. But, O happy apostasy. Thrice happy the day that truth triumphed, in my mind, over authority and interest. And would to heaven that I could see many such apostasies, from plans of entering into the ministry, the law, and all those employments, which oppress the poor ; and tend most wofully to degrade one half of mankind, to elevate and gratify the other.



I think that my class-mates, and fellow-students in the University, would do well to consider deeply, and to investigate candidly, the subject of their duty, before they resolve to enter either of the learned professions.

To do good, in the world, is the only profession which can give peace to the mind, and appear honourable in the sight of God. To hoard up knowledge as the miser does his riches, without condescending to impart any of it to our needy fellow beings, is one of those ridiculous absurdities of which mankind have always been guilty. Such as we have, let us impart to others, until their condition and happiness is on a level with our own. I mean not that all mankind should be equal in their possessions of property, perhaps this might not be expedient. But knowledge and happiness are capable of an equal diffusion among all classes of men. And should simony in all professions, cease, the period would soon arrive, when we could say again, "peace on earth, and good will to all men."

I wish to be understood, that when divines are spoken of in the course of this pamphlet, they are considered as a class and not as individuals. It is not the object of this work to raise a publick dispute. This, my present feelings would lead me to decline. If it, in any measure, serve to divest the subject of religion of that mysterious phraseology, which has too long concealed its simplicity and importance from the minds of men, one of its principal objects will be accomplished. I write not for reputation; that, I consider to be too transient a vapour to employ the noble mind, and to engage the affections of the pious heart.



## THE CELESTIAL MAGNET.

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As the benevolence of the Deity has made such a wonderful and inestimable provision, for the important and indispensable adventures of the mariner, from clime to clime, and from sea to sea, I am led so strongly to presume upon the same divine benevolence, as to think it has likewise made as wonderful a provision, by means of which, to direct the little, but imperishable bark of the human soul, across the sea of life, and to secure it a triumphant, and joyful entrance into the harbour of eternal truth, and the invisible city of celestial happiness.

And although the virtue of this Divine Magnet, may, at present, be but little known, and seem to be a subject of so much, and such universal distrust, as to be almost entirely neglected; yet the period has been, when many of the human species, by watching its pointings, as it stood for the harbour of eternal truth, have found their passage; and have, long since, entered into the full fruition of all that happiness, for the attainment of which, they so magnanimously encountered the forbidding difficulties and danger of life.

As the young and inexperienced mariner, who, fearful and faithless, at first, gradually feels his heart swell with a hope of reaching the sightless strand; so he, who follows invariably the dictates of Conscience, or of the Holy Spirit, as it is called in scripture, becomes more and more confident, that this holy principle will eventually introduce him into a peaceful realization of all truth.

I shall first attempt to show that we have strong ground to expect such a principle in the human mind, from the care and attention which the Deity has exhibited, in providing for the security and welfare of the body; and in the next place, that moral philosophers and christians, universally, know and believe in such a principle; and last, that this principle is, the *agion pneuma*, or holy spirit, mentioned so often in the scriptures.

In the first place, let us see what kind of a director man is to expect, as he is considered in a state perfectly free, from all that information, which has been transmitted to him by his predecessors, or communicated to him by his cotemporaries.



Man appears in this (to him) new and untried world, a weak and helpless creature ; for a long time, incapable of subsisting without the assistance of others, a perfect idiot, as to knowledge, though a perfect being, as to the possession of those faculties and organs, which are adequate for the attainment of all the happiness, which he was designed to enjoy himself, and to impart to his fellow beings.

By a careful revision of the matchless mechanism of his mind and body, he finds himself (that is his nature) completely fitted to the constitution of the world into which he has been introduced. He finds that the light of the sun, is made a pure and infallible medium, by the aid of which, the innumerable objects of creation are gradually revealed to his sight, brought within the reach of his investigation, and subjected to an accurate survey.

He finds that the mountain is fitted to swell his heart, and to ennoble his imagination ; the vast expanse of the heavens to amaze and astonish his mind ; the landscape to please him, and to invite his curiosity to survey the unrivalled mechanism of its flowery vesture ; the gentle river to enrich the neighbouring soil, to impart life to the adjoining fields of vegetation, and by the simple inventions of man, to lighten his labours, and to hasten the march of human industry.

The ocean, too, he sees completely fitted for wafting the necessities of life from clime to clime, while it cherishes and supports within its bosom, millions of beings, designed for the benefit and happiness of man : besides, ten thousand tribes of quadrupeds, and of feathered kind, stand the ready victims to satiate the hungry palate, and to invigorate the fainting energies of his body.

Man, likewise finds, that the atmosphere is not only fitted to support his labouring lungs, and to strengthen his enfeebled fibres, but that it wafts to his ear ten thousand varieties of sound, by which he can secure himself from impending danger ; and by the organs of speech communicate all his pains, wants and pleasures to his sympathizing fellow beings. And although he sometimes wantonly perverts this invaluable blessing, by the invention of musical instruments, and makes it a licentious repast for the ear, when its design was the support of life and the conveyance of useful information ; yet it is a standing monument of the benevolence, the wisdom and goodness of our Creator.

He also finds an exhilarating fragrance, luxuriously diffused through the vegetable kingdom, which has a like admirable fitness

to the organs of smelling, and serves to impart strength, and vigour, and pleasure, to the whole frame.

Nor does man here finish his discovery of the divine wisdom and goodness, in providing for the security and welfare of his present existence. The earth teems with ten thousand varieties of food, of cordials and delicacies, while his palate, like a vigilant sentinel, sits and separates the deadly from the salutary, and receives with discretion their cheering influence. These are common to every clime and region of the earth, so that every disease has its remedy, and every desire something to satisfy it.

Another order of God's blessing to man is perceived in the happy contrivance of the senses, to secure the body from evil and to promote its pleasure. The eye is most admirably adapted to discover the objects addressed to it, though it would be of no service without the medium of light. Nor is there less wisdom, in the construction of the ear. A most happy contrivance is discerned in the sense of feeling, to gain information from surrounding objects, and to guard the body from innumerable evils. The breeze refreshes it, the sun warms it, the shower cools it, and the atmosphere attempers it. Thus man, completely furnished with guardians to his body, with corresponding mediums of support, of pleasure and of remedy, is introduced, along from the cradle to the grave, through an almost infinite variety of grades, light being the great magnet to attract his eye and direct his steps.

Yet no miraculous operation is exerted to enable the eye to discharge its office, the ear to distinguish the varieties of sound, the palate to receive its diet, or the sense of feeling to inform us of the neighbouring objects. And although experience gives man a confidence in his ability to exert these organs, each must effect a certain condition in order to a complete discharge of its office. The opening of the eye is the condition of seeing, listening the condition of hearing, &c. These conditions are the obvious result of man's own agency. Nature sends forth no overweaning dogmas, to dissuade man from confiding in his ability, to govern and direct his senses, in providing for the safety and welfare of the body; but, on the contrary, she has displayed her usual benevolence, in giving to experience a wonderful power, to create in the breast of man, a confidence in his ability to provide for his present existence. And we should think him unworthy of the name of a human being, who should attempt to weaken that confidence, which the Deity has seen fit to place in man for his benefit and happiness.

But such is the temper of the present divines, that were all the

men of science on the globe, to exert the united force of their philosophy and learning, in dissuading men from putting trust in their ability to transact the common business of life, they would not have a more stagnating effect upon human industry, than many of these divines now do in morality and religion, who exert their utmost, to weaken that reliance, which experience teaches every man, to place in his ability to love and serve his Maker.

Perhaps this is a digression. Much more might be said of the benevolent provision, which an all-wise governour of the universe has made for the welfare of our present existence. But it will be at present omitted.

Finally, the care and mercy of the Deity, is impartially and universally exercised among his creatures. All enjoy the common and essential blessings; all are subject to the greatest and most fearful evils; nevertheless, there may be some little variety in the blessing and evils, which arises from the prudence or imprudence of the individual.

But, from the view we have taken, there is a strong presumption, that if our predecessors had exercised all the prudence of which they were capable, and also, if we should do the same, we might be free from most, if not all of those miseries, to which we are now subjected. How impartial, then, is the goodness of God in thus happily providing for our present existence! None of the tribes of the human species, is doomed to eternal darkness, by a general loss of their eyes, or by a privation of light; none to faint and expire for want of a refreshing atmosphere; none deprived of these fragrances, and of those cordials with which nature has so bountifully crowned her teeming board.

What has been now shown of the divine love and mercy in our temporal concerns, I think amply sufficient to drive our divines from that wicked and unaccountable paradox, which makes the Deity more careful and interested in the preservation of the body, than of the soul.

We wish not to prove that the providence of God is such, that he lets none of his creatures suffer. This opinion we see daily contradicted. All that is contended for, is that he has placed all mankind equally in a capacity of salvation; and all would obtain it, if they would but employ this capacity. We have already seen that the bodies of men are only placed in a capacity of salvation. The improvement of this capacity belongs to the agency of man.

The provisions that are made, for securing the health and effect-



ing the maturity of the body, make it highly probable, that the same benevolent being, who has done so much for one part of man, has, likewise, made a much greater provision for the soul, that part which never dies, and in comparison of which, the body is no more than an invisible dew-drop, to the great compass of the mighty deep. The indispensable necessity of such a principle, as can guide the soul of man safely through the vicious and deceitful windings, trodden out by designing men, is obvious to the mind of every one. The eye is not more necessary to direct the steps of the body, than the conscience and reason of man to direct the steps of the soul. And as the eye would be wholly useless to the body, without the medium of light, so would the reason and conscience of man be wholly useless to the soul, without that constitution of truths, which make up one side of the natural, moral and religious world. Moral and religious truths, when clearly perceived and practised, constitute the life and happiness of man.

That which makes these truths appear such to the mind, I call the holy spirit, or *agion pneuma*; mentioned so often in the scriptures. All will acknowledge, that there is a certain measure of evidence connected with every moral truth, which always introduces that truth into the mind, when attended to, and invariably impresses it thereon, in proportion to the attention paid to it. This light of evidence (as it is sometimes called) has been known, and experienced, in all ages, nations, and languages. "It is the light that raises up and gives energy to the depressed spirit of every man, that comes into the world." If attended to and followed, it gives to the mind perfect peace and consummate happiness. It dispels ignorance, doubt and error, the main sources of misery, and discloses to the human understanding, ten thousand beauties and excellencies, in the character of God, which are wholly concealed from the abusers and rejecters of this heavenly light. If then, all mankind agree, that there is a sufficient measure of evidence connected with every moral and religious truth, both to introduce it into and to impress it on the mind, in such a manner, as to produce all necessary action, then it is perfect folly to contend about the name of that which impresses the mind with truth; for it makes no difference, whether we call it the light of truth, the light of evidence, the sun of righteousness, the holy spirit, the grace of God, the comforter, or conscience; though this last name is better known and more generally understood, than the others.

Great care should be taken, that we get no more causes into the account, than are necessary to the production of the effect.

Now the evidence of truth has no more resemblance, in reality, to light, than it has to darkness. The foundation of the figure consists in the similarity of effects. Light is a medium by which alone, natural objects are revealed to the sight, and just such a proportion of it, appears to be necessary to obtain a complete perception of the object of vision. So evidence is that alone, which reveals both natural and moral truths to the understanding, and induces belief. And the faith we have in any truth thus revealed, is always in proportion to the evidence perceived. The operation of the understanding is necessary to the reception of this evidence, in the same manner, as the opening of the eye is requisite for a discovery of the object addressed to it. But, in either of these cases, there is nothing miraculous, as some would have it. Both these operations are the effect of man's own agency, as much as the growth of a tree, or of a spire of grass, is the effect of the agency of the Deity.

If all truths are eternal and immutable, and are all disclosed to the minds of intelligent beings, of one kind or other, by the light of evidence, then it is a very natural conclusion, that all created intelligences, are under the necessity of having agencies, independent of each other, capable of performing similar, yet separate conditions, in order to the complete discovery of these truths. It will be allowed by all men, I believe, that the happiness of our species, arises almost entirely from the perception and love of truth; but, if men think themselves in possession of sufficient power, to perceive and love natural truths, such as make up the sciences of mathematicks, natural philosophy, chymistry and metaphysicks, why should they listen to those paradoxical enthusiasts, who tell them that moral truths can just be perceived, but not truly loved without the assistance, nay more, the irresistible agency of God. But we might, with as much truth, pretend that the Deity himself, requires another agency to make him perceive and love truth as that man does. With respect to the perception and love of truth, man is made in the likeness of the Deity; else why made at all! why are these noble powers of reason, memory, imagination, and reflection given him, if he has not also an agency sufficient to employ them, in the investigation and love of those truths, which employ the sublime powers of Jehovah.

From what has been said, it evidently appears, that the understanding of man, is the only instrument, by which he discovers truth, his agency the power that employs it; and the light of evidence, or the spirit of God, as the ancients called it, that which in-



introduces truth into the mind, and <sup>im</sup> expresses it on it. The juror decides from evidence; the mathematician demonstrates from evidence; the chymist and naturalist admit no truth, but what appears such from a sufficient measure of evidence. In a word, the light of evidence is the only revelator in the natural and moral world; it is the unerring magnet, which has conducted both philosophers and christians, to a world of new and important truths. But, more especially, do we behold its wonderful power and agency in the moral and religious world. So much happiness did it afford the ancient christians, by revealing truths to their simple, honest minds, that they called it the comforter, the holy spirit of promise, which should lead them into all truth. But of its nature we are entirely ignorant; as much so as we are of the nature of mind, or power. Its effects only are perceived. We have no right to complain of the ancients, for calling it a spirit, nor they of us, for calling it evidence, or the light of evidence, or the light of truth. They were not able to separate it from the truths it revealed; and no more are we. The word spirit was the most proper and intelligible among them, as the word evidence may be among us. Undoubtedly they felt a much greater share of happiness from the influence of what these words express, than we do. Its effect upon the mind, depends entirely upon the honesty, or dishonesty, with which we go into the pursuit of truth. It sets the dishonest mind in torment, and the more dishonesty, the more torment; but the more honesty, the more happiness and peace. It so settles and pacifies the mind of the simple inquirer, that, in scripture language, "it becomes an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast," holding it still amid the clamour of popular opinion, and fashionable prejudices.

Some may startle at the idea, that what, at the present day, is called the light of evidence, is the same thing, as was called by the ancients, the *agion pneuma*, the comforter, or the grace of God. But, if we find that what we call the light of evidence, affords comfort to our species, and are sensible of no other cause, why shall we not take it for the same thing, which the ancients called comforter? They called what they preached the *enaggeion* or *logos*; ministers at the present day, call what they preach, the gospel, and tell their hearers, that it is the same that the apostles preached. But how do they know this? They certainly have a different name; as different as the word *pneuma*, is from that of evidence. The only reason that ministers have for thinking, that their preaching is the same as that of the apostles, is from a simi-

larity of effects. The apostles evidently meant by the *agion pneuma*, or holy spirit, that which tells men the right and the wrong, changes their hearts and affections, by the introduction of truth into their minds, and by impressing it upon them. But let a man, now, be perfectly honest ; let his mind converse awhile with the truths in the moral and religious world, let him divest himself of prejudice in this converse, as much as he would in demonstrating a proposition in geometry, and he will shortly find his soul translated out of its native darkness, into a world of light, enjoying all that happiness, possessing all that boldness of declaration, and all that patience and submission in suffering, which so remarkably characterized the lives of the apostles.

We know nothing of the meaning of these words, which the scripture writers used, except by our having experienced, what we think to be the same as they relate of their experience. It is we, in the language of the very candid Dugal Stuart, "that infuse the very soul into every word" of the scriptures. The astonishing power of truth upon the minds of the scripture-writers, very naturally led them to attribute it to some operating medium, which they seemed to think resembled the *pneuma*, or wind, for so the word meant in that age. But still had they been questioned upon this subject, they would, undoubtedly, have acknowledged, that they perceived no resemblance, in reality, between what revealed truth to their minds, and the wind, or spirit as they called it. But little did these holy, honest, simple men think, that these figures, which they were obliged to make the medium of communicating their thoughts to others, would become the basis of those paradoxical systems, which now burden and harass our species. They adapted their language to the character, the ignorance and the opinions of the age in which they lived, and thought not of providing opinions and rules of conduct for future generations. The apostles had imbibed, to their sorrow, the opinions and prejudices of their countrymen and ancestors, and now began to think it time to teach men not to get their rules of conduct from each other, but immediately from their heavenly Father. Him they thought a much nearer, better, and more faithful friend, than any they had on earth. They taught others that God was infinitely more tender and loving, than any earthly parent could be ; that his provisions for men were universal and impartial ; that his providence always had, and always would, pervade the universe. With a firm belief of a God of this character, they ventured their all in order to make him known to others. From the emboldening

effect, which truth had upon their minds, they referred their happiness to a pouring out of God's spirit. But will any man be so absurd as to contend, that the spirit or mind of God, is capable of being poured out, like a fluid, from one vessel into another? Or that, in reality, it is capable of descending and ascending? This would imply, that the mind of the Deity was moving about, and did not fill all space. Men often speak of pouring out their hearts and souls before God, but their souls don't leave their bodies, at those times, any more than at others.

Why, it may be asked, did the scripture-writers make so much use of the word *pneuma*, wind or spirit? It is well known, that the Jewish nation dealt more in comparisons, of all kinds, than any other nation with whose history we are acquainted. This custom arose, from the great deficiency of words, in their language. The wind, being an exceedingly subtle element, incapable of being detected by the eye, but still capable of producing astonishing effects, by its velocity and changes, they very naturally attributed the changes produced in their minds, by the impression of truths (which, before the day of their great leader, they were ignorant of) to some power, not perceived by the understanding; and which, in this respect, they thought to resemble the atmosphere. The comparison is a very <sup>impressive</sup> ~~extensive~~ one. We feel the effects of the atmosphere, but the eye cannot detect its nature; so the mind feels the happy effects of truth, when impressed upon it, by a sufficient measure of evidence, but the evidence itself, in the essence of it, is not perceived. If the honest inquirers after truth, now enjoy the same happiness, and express the same boldness, in defending it, which the primitive christians did, are we not obliged to say that truth is disclosed to their minds in the same way, and by the same power, although we give it another name, but which, perhaps, is better understood.

I perceive something in me, which tells me what is right and what is wrong for me to do. I also am sensible of a peace of mind, when I do the right, and of a torment when I do the wrong; I therefore think this principle to be the same, which in scripture, is called the holy spirit, and which is acknowledged to be an universal principle, a celestial magnet, to guide the intellectual world.

It has, generally, been considered, by metaphysicians, a faculty of the mind, but which has appeared so subtle a faculty, that they have almost despaired of defining it. My own opinion is, that it is not a faculty of the mind, but that it is as separate from the mind as light is from the eye. The light of evidence, I believe.



to be that true spirit, which points out to man every step of his duty. In the natural world, as I have before observed, there is a certain measure of evidence, belonging to every truth, and which reveals it to the mind. This is true of every proposition in geometry, in natural philosophy and chymistry. In the moral and religious world, truth is open to the mind in the same way. By contradicting the greatest measure of evidence on any subject of duty, we feel a degree of pain; by complying with it, we feel a degree of happiness. The faculty which perceives this pain or pleasure, I call conscience. But, as the term conscience, is generally taken to comprehend both that which gives us a prescience of right or wrong, and also the faculty which perceives the pain or pleasure of following the one or the other, it may be much the safest term to employ on the subject. I shall, therefore, use it accordingly, and contend that conscience is the magnet, which will point out to man every step of his duty, the only antidote to save him from his sins; and finally introduce him into a world of celestial truth.

In the language of Thomas Read, "it is the candle of God, set up in the human mind." It burns both day and night, giving light to all our thoughts and affections. Its faint glimmerings, are perceivable in every individual of our species. No human power is able to extinguish it, or to erase it from the mind. It lighted up the path of Abel, Noah, Moses, Daniel, Socrates, Christ, Paul, Luther, Fox, and innumerable others, whom time forbids to mention. It is a species of language, which the Deity uses, to make known his will to man, and which he has most admirably adapted to his understanding. Though man may be deaf, dumb, and blind; still it is a sure medium, to bring into his mind, the will of God. In a word, it is a voice, which no confusion can drown, and from which no torment can divert the attention. It whispers, and the Siberian marches to his Lama; the Hindoo to the Ganges, the Ottoman to his alcoran, and the christian to his bible. Finally, it is not in the power of man, to close the ears of his understanding entirely against it.

The virtue of this celestial magnet, is known only by experiment. When the Europeans first tried the power of the magnetick needle, to direct their course on the ocean, they were exceedingly timorous, daring only to venture a few leagues from their native shore; but venturing still further, gathering strength at every league, they at length reach our western continent, and sang their Te Deum, in celebration of the mighty power of God. So I

apprehend it will be, in some measure, with those who venture out from the scriptures to which, by education, they have become naturalized, and who shall take for their guide, that magnet which directed the course of the scriptural writers, and which will lead them into regions of truth yet unexplored.

Those who distrust this gift of God, and think it unworthy of their notice, must expect that their infidelity will increase, till they have rendered themselves incapable of condescending to so humiliating a leader. But though it be humiliating, yet it affords the mind all that freedom, and imparts to it all that boldness and dignity, which make up the life and happiness of man. When a man acts up to, and studiously improves all the known principles of his nature, what can he do more? He certainly improves in this case, all the talents, which he had given him. But if he abuses his conscience, he does despite to that very gift, or grace of God, which would have saved him from all his sins.

Jesus Christ did not bring the conscience of man, or the holy spirit, into the world. It always was in the world, though the world knew it not, as having virtue to save it from sin, as producing all that peace, love, joy, long-suffering, kindness, gentleness and truth, displayed in the conduct of the apostles, as healing, by dictates of prudence, all the diseases of body, as well as of the mind; and as giving a measure of foresight into the events of this world. But men have so long turned their attention from the dictates of this principle, and been listening so long to the melodious sounds of human invention, that they begin to think that nothing can be true knowledge; but what enters into the mind through the ear. But, says Dr. Campbell "it makes no difference what way knowledge gets into the mind, provided it be there." If then we find a principle in our minds, which gives us a knowledge of good and of evil, it is worthy of our highest attention. It is not placed there without some very important purpose. It deserves to be classed among the works of God, all of which hold a relative importance in the great system of nature.

It is acknowledged, by the most eminent of the Calvinists, that conscience, if not perverted, would enable man to live free from sin, and to perfect his nature. They likewise acknowledge, that man can pervert and resist, that operation of the holy spirit, which they wish to make something more than the light of conscience. But, if the influence of the holy spirit, as they make it, can be perverted, why should that be any safer a guide than the first gift of God, which is conscience. If both are equally liable to perversion,

I see no gain by admitting into their system a different guide from what is common to all mankind. If, therefore, it is generally acknowledged, that, by a due attention to, and a right improvement of that principle, which appears to be a gift universally acknowledged among all mankind, that man can perfect his nature, I think it would be much the safest way, to take it for the real spirit mentioned in the scripture, and to pay all our attention to *that*. We might as well say, that our reason must not be trusted to, because it is liable to deceive us, or that our memory and imagination must never be improved, because they are liable to deception; and that, therefore, we must have new faculties of reason, memory and imagination, before we shall be fitted to discharge our duty; as that conscience must not be trusted, because it can be perverted.

The man who pretends to distrust the efficacy of his conscience to lead him into all truth, may, for the same reasons, distrust the ability of his eyes, to discover the objects of vision; or of his ears to distinguish the varieties of sound. But the organs of sight and of hearing, aided by the powers of light and air, are the only means the Deity has ever given any man, to discover the objects of sight and to distinguish the varieties of sound. To suppose in this case, that the Deity ever has or ever will make any alteration in, or give any more assistance to man, in seeing and hearing, than he has already given, necessarily implies, that he can improve upon his own skill. So, if the conscience of man is a work of the Deity, as much as the eye is; to suppose that he ever does, or ever will give any more assistance, than the light of evidence, either implies that his work has failed of its object, or that he is or will be able to make some essential improvement upon his first attempt. Men may as well pray that God would increase the brilliancy of the sun, that they may see better, or change the nature of the atmosphere, that they may hear easier, as to pray that God would give them more assistance, than they now have to discover and obey his will.

I believe that God finished his work in making man, and in such a manner, as left no room for an after supplement, or alteration.—The whole analogy of nature may be brought in confirmation of this opinion. If, therefore, by a right improvement of what man possesses, he may perfect his nature; and become a real child of God, what does God or what do we wish for more? had we as much again assistance, as we now have, it would still rest upon a right improvement of it, whether we entered into heaven or not.

Let us not, therefore, despise little things, considering the wisdom,



the goodness and love of that being from whom we receive them. Though our gifts may be like mustard seeds on their reception, they are as much as we deserve, with the assurance that they are capable of infinite increase. If, then, we find that God deals with all his children in the same way, and like a kind parent speaks to them all in the same language; and discloses his will to them as fast and as fully as they are disposed to receive it, a verbal or written expression of his former dealings with some of them, is no rule for the rest. As a kind parent, he had much rather that they would all come individually to him, than to have them listening to each other. He can assign them their places better than any other being.

But some will say, how can we converse with God, since he is in heaven and we on the earth? Absurdly imagining, that God has chosen him out some more congenial place, where, perhaps, he has a throne of great glory, a right hand and a left, a footstool and a sceptre, in a word, where he dwells in all the ease, luxury and authority of a pope. No wonder that vice and iniquity prevail on the earth, when the Deity, in the minds of men, is placed at such an awful distance from them. But some there are, who boldly assert, both by word and practice, the immutability of God; that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; that he is so perfectly uniform, as never to deviate from a certain character; that he appears to the minds of all men, in all ages, on all occasions, and in all societies invariably the same; that his providence is the same, that by this *all* mankind may *learn* their Father's will and designs respecting them, that his residence, and his presence, are as visible in this world as in any anterior to it, or that shall come after it.

We feel perfectly satisfied with the means we possess of knowing the thoughts, designs and hearts of each other. And what are they? Merely motions, gestures and sounds, which, by a sufficient attention to them, give us a kind of mirror, in which we think ourselves able to see the very souls of men. Yet we *see* no mind, no intelligence, no power, no prudence, no prescience, no love, no benevolence there, we see only the effects or fruits of them. We see ten thousand inventions, such as towns, palaces, ships, steeples, arms, and an innumerable variety of machines, all effects of a power and intelligence, which are, in essence, hid from the eye, though we may have no doubt, but they exist in those bodies which we call human, which we are daily conversant with, which we see, love, hate, trust, listen to, speak to, handle and

sometimes destroy. When they are near us, we revere or despise them, according as we judge of their wisdom and goodness. But yet, that God is much nearer us, than we to each other, that he knows us better, shows more design, wisdom, benevolence and is readier of access, will be allowed by all, who acknowledge his existence. The effects of his wisdom and goodness, are ever before us, speaking to us in ten thousand ways. It is the language of philosophy, that the best poetical description is exceedingly rapid in comparison of nature contemplated in her own simplicity. And must not those descriptions of the Divine character, which were given in an age, when men seemed to catch only the ruder lineaments of it, be incomparably less fitted to impress the mind of man with just notions of God, and of his designs, than the pure countenance of nature now vigorous and fresh before us?

The writers of the scriptures themselves, seem to have been so fully impressed with an idea of the inadequacy of language to express what even *they* learned of the character of God from his works, and of the perishable nature of all human signs, that they referred their cotemporaries to a period, when they hoped that the human species would be so enlightened as to lay them aside, and individually fulfil the obligations they owe to their maker, as they are impressed upon, or written in their hearts, by a careful and diligent watch over his movements about them, and in them. What if men should contend that it was a much easier and safer way to learn the human character, by written signs and pictures, which are entirely devoid of those finer lineaments, constantly varying in the living countenance, than to obtain this knowledge by an actual observation of the expressions of all the passions and feelings, which exercise the heart? Would they appear more inconsistent than many of them now do, in chaining down the human mind to decipher the meaning of those antiquated enigmas and comparisons contained in much of the old and new testaments, in order to get a knowledge of God and of their own duty? The prophets saw the evil tendency of written laws and creeds; that they made men's minds contracted, uncharitable, and ambitious of engrossing all piety and true worship to themselves. They saw that the knowledge which their own countrymen had through this source, though originally derived from observations on the providence of God, made them boasters of their own institutions; and the most overbearing contemners of the comparatively inferior institutions of their neighbours. Jesus Christ saw their delusion, shewed them their error, and taught them to observe the growth



of the lily, and of the spire of grass, if they wished to learn the care, the wisdom and the power of God. St. Paul perceiving the great error of the Athenians, in placing him at so great a distance, as to make him unknown to them, strongly reprov'd their folly.

If, then, God is as visibly present in this world among his children, as they are among each other, what more danger is there of our mistaking his meaning, than the meaning of each other? And why not get his instructions as immediately as we get the instructions of our earthly parent? Wherever we behold an opening bud or a trembling dew-drop, there do we see a certain power and intelligence displayed as indubitably as the motion of my pen discovers a power and intelligence in me. Yet we are not in the habit of getting the designs of the Deity from his movements about us, and in us, as we are of each other. Yet were we accustomed to this method of learning the will of God, this language would in time become as intelligible to us as that which we use among ourselves. The blaze of the candle now before me displays infinitely more design than the candlestick, which holds it, does; yet I infer from the shape of the candle-stick, its proper design which is to hold the candle. So likewise of the blaze, that its object, or one of them, is to aid my eye in writing. I admire the artist who made the stick, and think him a well meaning man, though I neither know his name, nor where he lives. But the Deity, I know, must be as near to me as he is to the highest angel in heaven, and shall I not much more admire *his* power, wisdom and goodness, displayed so immediately about me?

But if I am taught that he is at an awful distance from the inhabitants of this world, and that he is inaccessible to them; that there is no meaning to his providence, my respect, my love, and gratitude to him, will in a great measure cease.

With what an awe we go into the presence of a great philosopher, whose language, motions, and gestures are all intelligible to us. How silent we are, and how willing to listen to him. But if we had been taught, that his mind existed not where we hear the sound of his voice, or where we see his motions and gestures; but at an awful distance, perhaps on the moon, or some other planet, our respect and attention to him would, in a great measure, cease. So with the Deity, if we are taught not to listen to him wherever we see the effects of his power and wisdom, we most certainly shall have no regard to him. But if we look upon every thing we see, even the lightning as directed with infinitely

more design than the very rod that is erected to receive it, we shall always praise his hand, and love and revere the wisdom, the goodness and skill of the Deity in this world as well as in the world to come. The next world may be different, but I see no reason for thinking that his presence will be any more sensible, or his Providence any more perfect and particular in that, than in this world. It is said in the scriptures, that in the next world, the Deity will be seen face to face. And so also Moses is said to have spoken with him face to face in this world. But what ignoramus will contend that the Deity has a face like a man, or that he was seen in the form of a man by Moses, writing with his finger on tables of stone. John says, "no man hath seen God at any time." If he be correct in his opinion, Moses' account cannot be taken, literally, as some seem inclined to take it. To be sure, John might never have read the account of Moses; but if ever he had, he certainly did not understand it according to the letter. It seems to be the most natural way, that we should gain an acquaintance with our Heavenly Father, as we become acquainted and familiar with each other; i. e. by an attention to what of him is passing about us and in our minds. Our affinity to him in the next world will, doubtless be increasing in proportion to our love, and adoration of his character; and our misery, to the hatred and despite which we have to his dealings with us. But all this, in some measure, we see in this world. We see that vice has a tendency to put God out of the thoughts of men, and to place him at a distance from them; and that virtue and piety has the opposite tendency of bringing him into their thoughts, and of producing an holy affinity to, and reliance upon him.

If what has now been said, be true, why should men think of taking the bible for their only rule of conduct in this life, any more than in the next? If the Deity reveals his will as immediately and intelligibly in this world as we expect he will in the next, why should any set of men cling to the bible as the only medium by which the Deity speaks to, and converses with his children? We can carry the bible no farther than the grave, and some have gained such an affinity to their God, that they have left it long before that time; and perhaps in passing from this world to the next, perceived but very little, if any difference in the manner in which God revealed himself to them.

That the bible was intended, neither by God himself, nor by those who wrote it, to be the chief rule of man's conduct in this world, is evident from a variety of reasons.

In the first place, if God has designs and information to communicate to his children, it is very probable that he chooses that medium of communication, which is intelligible to all of them ; so that they might pass from one nation to another, and from one language to another, but still understand the language of the Deity. But if the bible be the only will of God, men are under the necessity of carrying it with them in journeying over the world, among different nations and tongues ; otherwise they can have none, or but very little knowledge of his will and designs. Language, whether written or spoken, is constantly varying in its meaning. Words, sentences, and books, written in one age, have suffered a partial loss of their signification, when they have arrived to the next ; and by proceeding on through several ages, still losing as they advance, they must in time become quite obscure ; as we see verified in ancient books, especially in the meanings of the old and new Testaments. So we see that time and its changes will carry us *entirely* away from the original meaning of the scriptures, as it already has from the signification of the Egyptian language of hieroglyphics ; and in a partial manner from the meaning of several other languages, as the Sanscript, and the language of some of the natives of this country.

It is well known that enigmas and comparisons made up a large part of the language of the Hebrews ; so that by a remove from the subjects of these figures, which consisted of peculiar animals, trees, metals, persons, customs, vessels and diseases, this part of their medium of communication, can be but faintly understood by us. The bare words of an ancient author give us but half his meaning. The place, the circumstances, the company, the character of his nation, and his own passions and feelings, must all be known to receive his words in the senses which he affixed to them.

But does the Deity put his later children to all this study and perplexity in order to have an understanding of his will ? Had every event and transaction, every character and thought, every passion and its effect, which have existed since the creation of the world, been fairly inscribed on adamant or marble, all this would be utterly inadequate to convey to us the will of God respecting our conduct.

The next reason I have to offer against taking the scriptures as the chief rule of our conduct, is, that those who wrote them evidently addressed them either to their own age and nation, to certain societies, to individuals, or to certain occasions. And if they wrote and spoke to accomplish some object which they then had



view, when that object was accomplished, their writing and speaking had accomplished all the end for which they intended them. To make any further use of those writings, therefore, otherwise than as historical, is evidently destroying their original intention, or putting meanings to them which never entered the minds of the authors. Divines, when they preach, are in the habit of giving about five or six meanings to every text, so that the original meaning which was one, is now split into several, by the wild and disordered fancies of useless hirelings.

But if the scriptures be the real word or will of God, it ought, at least, to be capable of only one construction. Suppose that Jesus Christ had adapted (as he always did most admirably) one of his discourses to an audience of a particular character, profession and temper, (say to the class of scribes) whatever he might say to this class of people in that age, and in those circumstances, must be very illy fitted to the present age, in which there are none of that class of people in existence. The same observation is true of nearly all the new testament, particularly of the epistles which were in most cases private.

No one from reading those epistles, can say that the apostles had the least idea of, or made the least provision for their transmission to the next generation. But still, since they by accident have come down to us, they are taken to make it up in full, a volume, which is now made the only basis of happiness, true knowledge and benevolence. There were but few in those days who could write at all, and those few must have been greatly burdened, if they carried many of their writings with them, being altogether written on parchment. Men certainly at that age of the world and for several hundred years after it did not preach by note. And it is very doubtful whether many of them had access to the Bible. Had the Apostles lived in an age after the invention of paper and the art of printing, which have thrown the bible into so much repute, it is possible, they might have transmitted to us some of their sermons, which they called the preaching of the gospel, the word, the grace of God. But the circumstances in which they were placed, rendered them incapable of accomplishing so great a task as that of transmitting information to other ages, which would have access to the same fountain of truth. So that out of the innumerable multitude of their sermons, we have not a single one transmitted to us. Luke has given us a part of three, as nearly as he could recollect them, though perhaps, he made

some supplements of his own, which was a very customary and pardonable thing among ancient historians.

The scriptures we are in possession of, are said by divines to make up what they call a complete canon. But had the whole twenty-six histories of Christ, and all the rest of the epistles of the Apostles come down to us, these divines then would have said that all these writings made no more than a complete canon. Or had only half of what we now have, reached us, the case would have been the same. The council which collected the new testament, canonized just such writings as they pleased, and rejected the rest. So that it must be forever unknown to us, whether we have the most correct ones, or not. There is great probability that if more of the writings of the apostle, had come down to us, they would have contained information which would lead us to put a less estimate upon the scriptures themselves, but a much greater upon that spirit of truth, or pure conscience, which enabled them to conduct with so much propriety and holy boldness, in defence of the principles of their leader.

My third argument against taking the scriptures as our only rule of faith and practice, is, that there is not a single command in all the new testament for us, or any before us, to believe in them as the very word of God. We find such commands as these, that men must believe in God, that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; that they must believe in Christ, as the son of God, i. e. in his doctrines, which are partially revealed to the minds of all men. For to believe in Christ, is a figurative expression, put for a belief of what he taught; in the same manner as people say that they believe in Calvin, in Hopkins and Edwards, when they only believe in their doctrines. What were the private characters of these men, or when, or where they lived, it is unimportant to know.

The primitive Christians knew nothing, or but very little, about the scriptures. They were all guided by one simple principle, which they sometimes called a good conscience, and sometimes the holy spirit, the word and the gospel. To trust to the directions of this was the whole sum and substance of their faith. This principle led them to branch out into many inferences, and courses of reasoning; but these inferences and reasonings were all addressed to the people of their own age. But men are required, at the present day, to believe in the scriptures collectively, as the word of God, that the sin of Adam has depraved all his posterity.

that Jesus is God, that God pardons men on account of a few hours suffering of a mere man, that they must be miraculously converted, that men are naturally incapable of serving their Maker, and many other childish, yet savage opinions, which those who teach them, no more believe, than they do that the Goddess Diana fell down from heaven, into the city of Ephesus. Men's understandings are too near alike, to pretend that one substantially believes a thing, which to another is a paradox, when they have the same conveniences of investigation.

My fourth argument is, that if all the exertion were made that lies in the power of men, the scriptures could not be translated into the major part of the languages on earth. But the bible cannot be a rule to all, until all have it in their own language. Some languages are so exceedingly scanty in their words, that it would be impossible to translate three chapters, of the bible into them; and many others not being written must oppose a still greater obstacle. And even supposing it possible to translate the bible into all the languages on earth, how greatly it must suffer in a loss of its meaning. Were there only one language in existence, still there would be many who could not read it for themselves, but must trust to the reading and explanation of their bigoted and superstitious friends. All these difficulties make up, in my mind, an argument too powerful, easily to pass over.

My fifth argument is taken from the manner in which the scriptures have been transmitted to us. After the death of the apostles, when the embracers of Christianity had become very numerous, they gradually fell into disputes, which, daily growing warmer, and all the disputants, having a veneration for the opinions of the first leaders in the gospel, began to lay hold on every scrap of the first writings to settle their disputes. These writings, though scattered at great distances from each other, one part being at Rome, another at Corinth, and another at Ephesus, they collected and canonized, at least what of them they pleased. So we see that, in this instance, their transmission to us depended entirely upon the casual disputes of the early embracers of Christianity. These scriptures after being collected, were held in the hands of a very few, and it was not unfrequently the case, that even these few were incapable of reading them, so exceedingly ignorant, were the dark ages, of the art of writing. War was their element. They thought not, or but little, of the useful arts.

In the further progress of the bible, down to us, there is a period



related in history, when there was but just one bible in the whole continent of Europe. This was held fast in the hand of the pope. Here, then, according to the doctrine of the present divines, was the whole, the complete will of God, held in the hand of a single man. But with as much consistency might they contend, that, at some former period, the amazing splendour of the sun, which has for ages, warmed and vivified creation, had been compressed within the little compass of a pint measure, held in the hand of a single man, the earth darkened, and all the labours of men suspended, as that the real will of God, has ever been so far withdraw from the hearts of men as to leave them entirely without a knowledge of it. Since the art of printing was invented, the scriptures have become more general, and from this circumstance many are of the opinion that at some future day they will become universal. But this period will not arrive, till the nations of the earth fall into the use of fewer languages. If we wish all mankind to become the real lovers of God, they must be taught in a much shorter and safer way, than by learning their duty from the bible. Ministers of the gospel must go forth, as Paul did to Rome, with revelation in their hearts, and teach men, as he did the Romans, that "that which may be known of God is manifested in men, for he hath showed it unto them "by the things which he hath made."

My sixth argument is, that, according to our divines' own sentiments, ministers cannot preach the gospel, without the same revelation which Christ and his apostles had. For doctors of divinity pretend to admit this text in Paul's epistle in its full extent, "If any man preach any other gospel, than this which I preach unto you, let him be accursed." But what gospel did Paul preach? and how did he receive it? by reading a few of the epistles of his ancestors? No. He says, "I received it by revelation from God." But who will have the presumption to say, that he preaches the same gospel, which Paul did, while he is destitute of that immediate revelation which made it the gospel in the mind of this apostle, and of those who heard him? What circumstance distinguished the gospel in the mind of Paul, but this, that it came by immediate revelation, to him, and that it always would come in the same way to others. The gospel of Christ was the doctrine of an universal sonship, it taught that men must divest themselves of the desires of personal and family advantage, and consider our species as the great household of God, having him only for their instructor; that those who were obedient should enjoy him forever, but that those who were not should go to their own place.

But the divines of the present day, make no pretension to that revelation, which Christ and his apostles thought it necessary for them to have, in order to preach the gospel ; but still they say, that they preach the same gospel. They command their hearers to bring forth the same fruits, which, in the primitive Christians, sprang from a spirit of immediate revelation, and this they say ceased with the first churches. But if this spirit ceased with the apostles, all that peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness and truth, which so immediately results from it ; must have ceased with it. The same causes must exist to produce the same effects. And how a man can hold up his face, and say that he preaches the same gospel which Paul did, without the same spirit of revelation, I am unable to say. If a certain quantity of water will move a wheel at a certain rate per day, a greater or less quantity of water, will alter the rate of the wheel, into a greater or less quantity of motion. So must a man's conduct alter, in proportion to the number and efficacy of the causes which affect his mind. Therefore, if the primitive christians had operations on their minds, more immediate and miraculous, than people can now have ; or if they had the will of God revealed more clearly to their minds, and impressed more powerfully upon them, than it may now be revealed to, and impressed upon men's minds ; ministers act just as consistently in requiring the same conduct in their hearers, which they find recorded in the bible, as they would do in requiring a wheel to move as fast with three feet of water, as it can with six. But all this contradiction is smoothed over in their preaching, with a single dogma ; and their hearers are taught to solve all their difficulties in a single word, called *mystery*, by which they are ready to challenge the understanding of any man. Into this inferiour condition they say that Adam has thrown them. But with as much truth may they say, that they have been drawn into it by a person who shall live a thousand years hence.

All these pitiable remains of popery, are yet to be torn up, and laid aside, out of the view of posterity, before we get to that solid bottom, on which is to be erected that temple of truth and peace, whose capacious walls, will embrace the whole human family.

My last argument is, that no one, from reading the scriptures, can infer that they constitute the very will of God. They are merely a collection of words and sentences, whose meaning is brought to them and affixed to them by the reader himself. So that all the essential information supposed to be contained in the



scriptures, exists already in the minds of those who read them.— And if so, why can they not attend to it as well in their own minds, as they can after they have affixed it to the scriptures? To be sure it may assist them in recollecting their information, by giving it a certain form and by expressing it in words. But metaphysicians would tell us, that this is not the best method even for recollecting our information. A christian carries the precepts of the bible in his mind in the same manner as a mechanick carries the rules, for building a house or a ship, in his mind. The christian knows his precepts none the better, nor the mechanick his rules, for having them written. A preparation to read the bible, undeniably implies a certain measure of knowledge of what it contains. Otherwise, men would be in the same predicament, in reading the scriptures, as a ploughman entirely ignorant of mathematics, would be in solving problems in Algebra. And besides the very best labours of the clergy, go in every respect to prove my present position. All their endeavours to spread the scriptures among the ignorant people of our country, as well as among heathen nations, show that these people are in some measure prepared to read them; and if they are prepared to read them, they are prepared to put a meaning to them, and if prepared to put a meaning to them, they have that meaning or information already in their minds. So that even the very heathens have a partial revelation of God's will already in their minds. Every thing which is said and done about religion implies a foundation for it already laid.— So that the bible is only one of the means, which serve to carry up the building.

The foundation, God himself has laid, and he has laid it in such a manner, that all the efforts of earthly power will never raze it from the human mind. This foundation for understanding the information contained in the scriptures, is what moralists call natural religion, i. e. a partial revelation of the will of God. Says Bishop Butler, "For though natural religion is the foundation and principal part of revelation, it is in no sense the whole of it." Again, says the same author, "Christianity is only an extension of natural religion." But, if christianity (by which is usually understood the doctrines contained in the new testament) be only an extension of natural religion, are not people at the present day, even heathens, capable of making this extension? If we visit different parts of the earth, and peruse the histories of some ancient nations, on this subject, we shall find, that some of those, whom we called heathen,

have extended their natural religion to a considerable length, and even quite up to Christianity. The natural religion of Socrates, was extended well up towards christianity. So was that of Melchisadeck, and of that Cretian prophet, whose testimony Paul quotes in his epistle to Titus, "One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said "the Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." This witness is true, says Paul. And what do we wish of any man, more, than to be a witness of the truth as it is in Jesus, or more properly, perhaps, as it was revealed in the mind of Paul? Several other quotations are made from heathen authors, in the scriptures, which bear as good a testimony of the truth as this.

It is, likewise, the opinion of moralists, that natural religion is revealed to the minds of men in a natural way. If this opinion be true, and also that Christianity is merely an extension of it, then the truths of Christianity, are revealed in the same natural way.—So that all the superiority, which the primitime Christians ever held over their heathen neighbours, was barely a greater improvement of that natural revelation, which is acknowledged to be common to all mankind. And this opinion appears to gather strength when we reflect that all truth in the sciences of mathematicks, natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, astronomy and metaphysics, is revealed to the human mind, in a natural and very pleasing way.

I will just give my opinion of the value of the scriptures, and resign the subject to better hands.

I believe that Paul had a pretty right idea of the value of them, when he told Timothy, that they were *profitable* for doctrine (or discipline, as it may be translated) for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. To say, that they are the *principal* source of doctrine, of reproof, of correction, and of instruction in righteousness, is something which no one believes. It is an honest history of the progress of a revelation to God's children. And the man who says, that he believes every word of the bible to be the very word of God, knows neither what he says nor whereof he affirms. In a word, the bible is a book which serves greatly to strengthen the faith of the lovers of God, as it teaches them that he always was a tender, loving and benevolent Parent, ever ready to answer their petitions. It likewise refers to a state of future rewards and punishments; not a state, however, intended merely to reward or punish, for what we do here, though the actions

here performed may be taken into the account. It affords us a variety of instruction, which is to be found in but few other books; though the journals of Brainard, Scott, Taylor and Howard are, in my opinion, much more worthy of perusal, and their conduct expressive of much more devotion, and immediate revelation than that of many of the personages mentioned in the old testament.



THE

# CELESTIAL MAGNET,

NUMBER II.

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BY DAVID B. SLACK.

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“ Conscience \* \* \* \* \*

The sly informer minutes every fault.  
A watchful foe ! the formidable spy,  
Listening, o’erbears the whispers of our camp :  
Our dawning purposes of heart explores,  
And steals our embryos of iniquity.

*Young’s Night Thoughts.*

N. B.—It is in contemplation to publish several subsequent numbers, already in preparation, averaging about 24 pages each.

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## PREFACE.

I choose to inform the reader of the following sheets, that the opinions, which some have *pretended* to entertain of the first part of the Celestial Magnet, are far from giving me the least discouragement in my quest of truth. When pure conviction wafts the understanding down the peaceful current of truth; or in scripture metaphor, when the soul is *moved* along solely by the light of evidence (the only light, says Locke, ever known to the mind\*) it can fear no evil.

The sentiments, which I have advanced, are by no means new, though every individual may not, without some reflection, recognise them as having often passed his mind. The careful reader, however, will find them, like solitary spires of wheat, amid fields of tares, scattered through the writings of Jews, Gentiles, and Christians. To clear away the rubbish, which has, in some measure, concealed them from the majority of people, and to give them a collected form, is all I ever thought of accomplishing. I have, from the commencement of my writing, felt equally as ready, and thought it equally as much a duty and pleasure to acknowledge an error as to publish a truth. I do not offer this type of my sentiments, this mere shadow of what I think, to be the truth, as a rule of faith and action to any man. The Deity has furnished every *man* with an understanding competent to the investigation of truth, and it would be impious in me to attempt to rob him of the pleasure of exercising that understanding.

Nothing but the pure light of evidence, can reveal real truth to the human understanding. And so far am I from wishing any man, to make any of my writings, a measure of his faith, that had I lungs of brass, an iron tongue, and a voice of thunder, I would say, lean not on man, a mere arm of flesh. To my own master, I must stand or fall. The evidence, which has been let into my mind, upon the truths which I have merely transcribed, is sufficient to convince me, that they are not errors.

\* Volume 2d. chapter on enthusiasm, section 13, "Light, true light in the mind, is, or can be, nothing else but the evidence of the truth of any proposition. To talk of any other light in the understanding is to put ourselves in darkness."





## CELESTIAL MAGNET.

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Many serious attempts have been made, to develope and to illustrate some one universal principle, in which all mankind have been and are found to agree, in which they all have an involuntary belief, and which they all receive as a rule of action. But these attempts have, in general, failed of their object, inasmuch as they have developed no principle of sufficient universality to satisfy the minds of all denominations and sects of men. *Some parts of the scriptures describe the true principle*

Thus has a large part of mankind, been troubled and perplexed, from time immemorial, to find something in every individual of our species, which may justly be regarded as a foundation for divine complacency, and which may render man a candidate for salvation from sin. What stumbles most people, is the wonderful variety and often complete opposition of the opinions, customs, and disciplines, which different ages and nations have and do now receive as sacred, and regard as essential to their present happiness and future welfare.

But the moment man is made to take his proper grade in the scale of being, and to hold his just relation to his God, this long day of dreariness and perplexity to the human mind clears away, and the great luminary of truth pours in, its divine rays, to the full satisfaction of every individual.

Although man forms the highest link of that vast chain of being, so indicative of infinite wisdom and omnipotent power, he nevertheless possesses many properties, instincts, passions, and performs many actions in common with those animals which are inferior to him, in his capacities to improve, to enjoy, and to communicate. And so far as man possesses a nature in common with the lower species of animals, just so far does the Deity treat him as a member of the animal race. For if a part of our species be thrown without their consent into such a combination of circumstances and kind of education, that they are without compunction bred up to possess the blind ferocity of the lion, the rapacity of the tiger, or the venom of the asp, they are no more accountable for the possession of this nature, than the lion is for his ferocity, the tiger for his rapacity, or the asp for his venom. Such men are as well pleased with their natures, as though they had been as harmless and as pure as those of the highest beings on earth.

This idea serves to illustrate that profound saying of Jesus Christ, when he said to the Jews, that such and such practices and dispositions were, by the Deity, permitted to exist for the hardness of their hearts. The Deity permits wars and all other kinds of misery to exist now, for the same reasons and precisely in the same way, among other nations. Could men choose the places of their birth, their instructors, their models for imitation, and the opinions to be instilled into their minds, and still possess such brutish natures, they might then possibly and even probably be guilty of great iniquity. But in these respects, they have no more choice, nor is it possible for them to have any more, than in the order and variety of the seasons.

All that the Deity requires of men, is to act according to that kind and that measure of knowledge, which they have given them. If they have not advanced beyond the instinctive knowledge of the mere animal, if they have not as yet arrived to that point of improvement, where moral sentiment begins, they are in each of these degrees of knowledge, if they perfectly improve them, as perfect as he who has arrived to the summit of moral perception, and has improved every particle of his knowledge. Or if they never pass the boundary of instinct, but live and die like the lamb or the lion, they will be treated by divine wisdom as subjects of the same family.

Let no man think, that by these comparisons. I am endeavouring to prove that the souls of the lower orders of the human species, are to be annihilated. The whole scope of what I have said goes to prove the reverse. And I must have more reasons and stronger reasoning than I have ever yet seen, to convince me that the spirits of the brute creation are annihilated at the dissolution of their houses of clay. Nor is this a peculiar opinion,\* it is one congenial with the tenderness of the human soul, and is the belief of many christians and philosophers.

But it is a matter of fact, as well as a sentiment flowing from our persuasion of the benevolence of the Deity, that He treats and provides for the different mental states of the same species, on the same principle that He does the different states of individuals of different species, i. e. according to their obedience or disobedience to that kind and measure of knowledge, which He has given them. This principle was recognised and most beautifully illustrated by Jesus Christ, in his parable of the talents given to the ten servants. The first was apparently in a state of infancy, just arriving to the exercise of his understanding, and to him was entrusted only one.

\* It may be found in Bishop Butler's Analogy of Nature.



talent. The second had made a farther advancement, which was estimated at two talents, and so on to the tenth, who probably had reached the highest degree of Divine knowledge. The Deity does not treat his creatures according to the merits of those classes and sects into which men have divided themselves, but according to their individual deserts.—This was the idea of Jesus, when he said to the Jews, “had I not come to you, ye should not have sinned, but now ye have no cloak for your sins. Had those jews, to whom, he then spoke, been deprived of his instruction, they would have remained in their old practices without a conviction of their sinfulness, and would have been permitted, by God, to go uncondemned.

I see no reason, why a variety in the conduct and dispositions of the same species, should be any more a matter of wonder, or unaccountableness, than a perfect uniformity would be. For a variety is created by causes equally beyond the control of the individual, and which are equally as much the appointment of the Deity. We should think him very unwise, who should ask why all the animal tribes, were not made of one and the same species. But the same power, which makes one animal a lion, another a tiger, another a lamb, makes one man a Hindoo, another a Chinese, another an Indian, and another a Christian, but makes no man a liar, a thief, or a robber, these characters must bear the burthen of their own iniquities. When Christ taught this doctrine to the narrow, bigotted Jews, he was reviled by them, and they said “this man is a sinner, who can hear him.” If the holy Jesus was called a sinful man, for publishing this doctrine, how much more shall I be. But let men throw off their narrow, measured systems of salvation from sin, and come down to the plain, simple truth, or unquestionable matters of fact, and they will find, that this doctrine has a foundation more solid and immoveable than the mountains.

What meaning is there in asking, how the Indian or the Bramin can be saved from his sins? Perhaps, such has been his oppressed situation and low condition, that he has not yet arrived to the period of understanding, or to a knowledge of good and evil, or is not capable of being governed by any higher rule of action, than is his dog, his cow, or his infant child. There is nothing very repulsive in the idea, that a human being may, through the whole course of a long life, act from mere instinct, like idiots and children. This kind of action as evidently supposes the immediate direction and control of the Deity, as the highest degree of inspiration, and in my mind is much of the same nature. Jesus commanded his



disciples to return to the innocence and simplicity of little children, who seem to have nothing but pure feeling to act by, a feeling created by the immediate power of God. But the moment the creature arrives to a knowledge of evil, and has actually committed it, the only way given or known under heaven to be saved from it, is to confess it, and to turn from it. This is the way, that Christ insisted on as the only true way. And this way is unavoidably known to every one who has committed sin.

We read in ancient history of a certain description of human beings (or as some have called them, inhuman beings) denominated cannibals or eaters of human flesh. This class of beings, at first view, have the appearance of being destitute of the least possible degree of moral perception (that is, a perception between good and evil) and it is not impossible, but that this might have been the case, though, in my mind, it is not at all probable. How to dispose of these and the like characters among our numerous species, so as to justify them in any degree, in the sight of Deity, has been a puzzling-chain with many, nearly ever since the good news of Jesus were promulgated in the towns and cities of Judea. But this simple and benevolent principle, viz. that the Deity treats his creatures according to their obedience or disobedience to that kind and measure of knowledge, which He has given them, is broad enough to admit the faithful even among these wild, carnivorous infants of our species into a full participation of all that Divine favour, which those experience, who leaving all that's earthly, have entered into the more pure and unsullied kingdom of God. As many of these cannibals as have improved that talent of knowledge, which they have received (no matter through what instruments or manner of education) "are good and faithful servants, and have entered into the joy of their Lord." But the moment that the magnet of Divine truth began to tremble in the breast of any of these seemingly cruel beings, and to stand strongly for the harbour of integrity, justice and mercy, they that moment became answerable and punishable for their iniquities. Those beings most certainly had no more sins to be saved from, than they had actually committed, and were actually sensible of. For a salvation from sin, supposes a conviction of sin. else the brute creation stand in need of salvation as well as men.

It must be recollected, that the distinction of species and genera into which the vast chain of beings has been divided, is the work of men ; and that the Deity does not deal with his creatures according to the divisions and subdivisions of men, but individually and according to the good, or bad use,

which they have made of that talent, which he has given them. Men do not shorten the work of the Deity by their divisions and subdivisions of his creatures, however philosophical or ingenious. He acts in reference to none of their doings, but according to his own good will and pleasure.

Undoubtedly, many of our day would be almost confounded, should they be informed that something like the cannibalism of which I have been speaking, existed, or was in danger of existing, under all the light of the covenant of Moses, and of the instruction of the Jewish priesthood. The 27th, 28th, and 29th verses of the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, reads thus—"And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then will I walk contrary unto you also, in my fury, and I, (God,) even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins, and ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat." If this state of things could exist among individuals of the Jewish nation; and if these individuals could still be in a salvable state, it should be no kind of marvel, that the same state of things can exist at other periods, and in other parts of the world, upon the same principle. The verses above quoted represent rather a degenerate state of the Israelites, than an uncultivated state: and the degeneracy here implied, is represented as preparing them for this lamentable act of misery. Had they been bred up to this conduct, like those animals, which instinct impels to prey upon each other, they would have been, like those carnivorous tribes, justified in the mind of Deity. For in the words of the pious Young, they

"Who do the best their circumstance allow,

"Do well, act nobly; angels could no more."

But the Jews having departed from their integrity, grew gradually in iniquity, till the misery of their degeneracy was but a just, and an equitable punishment for their wickedness.

How insufficient is any one code of human laws, or even any one thousand, or one million of codes, to reach the mental states and the various degrees of the improvements of the human species. Man as an individual is continually passing out of one state of existence into another, somewhat new and untried; and if he resigns himself, unreservedly, to the light of evidence, every day, every moment, seems to give him a new birth; and like our noble ancestor, Columbus, he, ingenious, sings his joyous *Te Deum* at his entry into every new world. Not so he who is confined to the circular marches of an idolized theory: *his* faculties seem rather to wither and decay at every step, and far from progressing, they ignobly and

selfishly remain in the womb of everlasting immaturity.— Who, but Thou, O mighty God, art able to govern, to reward, and to punish this vast chain of being, which from Thee began.

It has been an inexplicable mystery with many, how man can be *capable* of inheriting, receiving, or contracting such a state of mind, as to punish, torture and even to slay his fellow-men and himself, and still feel justified and innocent in his doings. But perhaps, to these very persons, it is no mystery, how animals of a lower order, impelled by an instinct from God, can prey upon each other, or how a man can lose his sight, and in consequence of it fall from a precipice, and end his existence, or how the Deity can send a pestilence, a famine, or an earthquake, and destroy thousands of beings at once. The truth of the matter is, that men try to solve these things upon a wrong principle, and get perplexed and bewildered like the young arithmetician, who attempts to *divide* his shillings to get them into pence.

Men grow up like trees, according to the soil in which they are planted ; they differ in colour, in features and in stature ; and in most of the opinions, and sentiments, which they imbibe, they have no more choice and agency, than they have in the growth of their bodies, or in the proportion and consistency of their features. The Hindoo walks up to the flames of death with the same composure, and from the same principle, that he walks up to the table of refreshment. The Chinese puts the fatal knife to the neck of his aged sire, with the same composure, and from the same principle, that he puts the foot of his infant into an iron shoe, or bathes himself in the refreshing river. The Christian warrior who is sincere, marches up in the front of death, and sheathes his bayonet in the bosom of his brother, with the same composure, and from the same principle, that he seats himself at the table of his Lord. All happy, all without a compunction. O mysterious Deity, how unbounded is thy mercy, how marvellous is thy wisdom. O may I ever receive the rod from thy hand, with as much love as I do thy greatest blessings. It appears to matter not what our natures are, provided they are innocent, happy, and the gifts of God.

On the principle, that men are dealt with according to their obedience, or disobedience to that kind and measure of knowledge, which they possess, and on no other principle, can the covenant, the conduct, and the dispositions of Moses and the Israelites, be justified and regarded as divine. This system of religious policy, and its subjects have been the common mark, at which the shafts of malignant and shallow philosophy, have for ages, been hurled. No doubt, but that



in many respects, it was a bloody system, but no more so than many now in existence. It was the best that Moses and the Israelites were capable of receiving, and consequently, was founded upon philosophical and divine principles. But still the person, who reads many of the laws and commands of the old covenant, however divine in their origin, will be ready to say that the new and better covenant, of which Jesus Christ was the mediator, was seasonably introduced. This covenant, (instead of binding whole nations, like the former, which was but a shadow of the new) binds every individual immediately to his God, makes him a king over the province of his own heart, and a priest to get his knowledge immediately from his God. It is not in writing.

But according to that palpable and unwarranted assumption of many Calvinists, "that the Deity judges all mankind by the same identical rule,"\* which some of our species never knew, and many never were capable of knowing, the whole system of Moses, must be considered as impious. No wonder that they tremble so much at infidelity, when the brittle, silken thread upon which they hang, is of their own spinning, and perhaps will break of itself, even under the soundest slumbers of infidelity. How can the Calvinist reconcile with his scholastic rule of salvation, this statute which Moses delivered in the name of God, Levit. chap. xxi. 9th. verse, "*And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.*" A funeral pile prepared for the daughter of a clergyman, or a layman, would at this day, let her be ever so great a prostitute, be insupportable. The dullest sympathies of the pirate, would be so roused at such a spectacle, that he would involuntarily drag the victim from the angry flames. That this Mosaic statute was of divine authority, I have no doubt, but it originated in a time, and was applicable to a people, which do not now exist, in Christendom, though they may in other parts of the world.

A class of men called Christians, long ago threw off the burdensome garb of the Mosaic covenant, as they did their woollen garments at the arrival of the vernal season, and left nothing remaining, but that divine principle of truth, which convinces every man of his sins and justifies him in his integrity. John the Baptist planted the seeds of righteousness, Jesus of Nazereth watered and nurtured the scions, and his disciples prepared them for the garner of God. Thus, step after step, one dispensation preparing for another, did human forms, and rules, and disciplines recede, till the subjects

\* I mean the bible.



of the gospel triumphantly sang "the kingdom of God is truly come on earth." But soon the scene changed ; the veil of Moses began again gradually to be let down, and form after form, rule after rule, and creed after creed, was gradually enforced ; the slumber of death soon commenced ; chains of slavery were forged amid the general slumber, and men shrouded in a lethargy, fatal to their improvement, knew but little of their condition till Fenelon, Molinos and Fox announced again the rising of the sun of righteousness.

In my father's house, said the Divine Jesus, are many mansions : had it not been so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you i. e. by my going away, your dependance on my personal instruction will be cut off, and placed on God, who alone can admit you into his kingdom. In other places, it is said that the *heart* of man is the house or temple of God. consequently, by many mansions, he must have meant that there were many different states of the human soul equally acceptable to the divine being, and that by his going away their acceptability would be perfected. God is represented as *coming* into this world in the form of a servant, but this must be a figure, for where could He come from ? Is He any more present in any other world, than in this ? He comes in the *form* of a servant to every heart that will hear, and receive what he brings, viz : a robe of righteousness. By the phrase, coming, &c. nothing more could have been meant, than a new perception of his power in consequence of the abolition of the veil of prejudice in the human mind. The kingdom of God is represented as being *within* those, who obey him in heart. These scriptures clearly show the difference between the Christian's heaven and the Mahometan's, which is a place of locality, and consequently at a certain distance, and in a certain direction from the earth. But to conclude ; let no man think, that God will justify him in his sins : No. He commands all who know what sin is, to flee from it as from a deadly thing. He never will let the faithful go unrewarded, nor the guilty escape the punishment of their iniquities.

THE

# CELESTIAL MAGNET,

NUMBER III.

BY DAVID B. SLACK.

Proud men, suppress your scorn, forget my youth,  
Weigh well my reasons, and *then* judge their truth;  
If these you find scholastick, or unsound,  
Point out their weakness, and I'll yield the ground.

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## PREFACE.

I have chosen the celebrated John Locke to preface this number of the Magnet. Speaking of a particular class of men whose understandings had been cast into a mould and fashioned just to the size of a received hypothesis, he makes the following admirable remarks. "Would it not be an insufferable thing for a learned professor, and that which his scarlet would blush at, to have his authority of forty years standing, wrought out of hard *Greek* and *Latin*, with no small expense of time and candle, and confirmed by general tradition and a reverend beard, in an instant overturned by an upstart novelist! Can any one expect that he should be made to confess, that what he taught his scholars forty years ago was all error and mistake; and that he sold them hard words and ignorance at a very dear rate? What probabilities I say, are sufficient to prevail in such a case. And who ever, by the most cogent arguments, will be prevailed with, to disrobe himself at once of all his old opinions and pretences to knowledge and learning, which, with hard study, he hath been labouring for, and turn himself out stark naked in quest of fresh or new notions? All the arguments that can be used, will be as little able to prevail, as the wind did with the traveller to part with his cloak, which he held only the faster."

"Earthly minds, like mud walls, resist the strongest batteries; and though, perhaps, sometimes the force of a clear argument may make some impression, yet they nevertheless stand firm, and keep out the enemy truth, that would captivate or disturb them." To the above, I shall make no addition.





## INTRODUCTION.

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As the subsequent dissertation is rather intended to expose the false opinions of others than to establish a new system, some candid persons may think, that it does away all their religion, and that they have nothing in it offered them, as a rule of faith and duty. But if such is the nature of your religion, whoever you are, that it can be done away by the power of human invention and reason, the sooner you realize its destruction the better and the safer it will be for you. If you harbour such fearful apprehensions as these, is it not a clear indication, that you look not for the kingdom of heaven where only it is to be found ; that is, in your own hearts, the true and only temple and throne of Almighty God. And if you are looking for any other kingdom of God than that within you, your hopes and fears are of your own fabrication, and will assuredly fail you.

But if, in scripture metaphor, you suffer your old heaven and earth to be done away, and regard the kingdom of God as a grain of mustard seed placed in the heart of man (however unfashionable this glorious kingdom may appear, thus reduced) you are on that rock, where the frightful surges of calumny and falsehood may beat, but cannot remove you.— On the other hand, if the temple of your hearts is not so far swept of its wickedness, fraud, injustice and deceit, and garnished with confession, restitution and repentance, as to admit that little seed of divine power and counsel, called conscience, to discharge its office, unimpeded by your obstinacy and self-importance, you have closed the door of God's kingdom against yourselves.

I believe that all our knowledge of the Deity and of religion amounts in the commencement of it to no more than this, there is a powerful something in the human mind which makes a distinction among our thoughts, affections and actions, into what is called right and wrong. This powerful something which makes this distinction is no less and no other, than the God whom all men obey or disobey, by whom all men are tormented or made happy, a power over which we have no control.

We have power to remember or not to remember, to reason or not to reason, to reflect or not to reflect. But in spite of all our power, we are convicted if we do some things, and approved if we do others. Some attribute these convictions and approbations to conscience, by which, they say, they mean no more than a faculty of the mind. But if conscience is no more than a capacity of the mind, and at the same time the origin of conviction and approbation, why have not men power to use and govern this capacity, to convict and approve themselves at their pleasure? Nothing is more evident, than that, when men speak of the stings, the convictions, and the approbations of conscience, they include in this term, besides a capacity of the mind, an omnipotent, omnipresent, uncontrollable power, which is as distinct from the mind as light is from the eye, and which, by acting upon a capacity of the mind, produces the sense of right and wrong, in like manner as the light of the sun, acting upon the eye, produces the phenomena of vision; whence the foundation and propriety of that figurative expression in scripture, "God is light."

To confirm and more clearly illustrate what I have already said upon this important subject, I am happy in being able to bring the testimony of one of the most profoundly erudite and apostolic men that ever lived, the Abbe Fenelon. Says this truly divine personage, in enumerating the self evident propositions of religion (Guyon, vol. 2.) "It is easy to perceive that our feeble reason is continually set to rights by another superior reason, which we consult within ourselves, and which corrects us. This reason we cannot change, because it is immutable; but it changes us, because we have need of it. All consult this, every where. It answers in China as in France and America. It does not divide itself in communicating itself. The light it gives me takes nothing from those who were before filled with it. It communicates itself, at all times, immeasurably, and is never exhausted. It is the Sun, which enlightens minds, as the outward sun does bodies. This light is eternal and immense. It comprehends all time as well as all space. It is not *myself*, it reproves and corrects me, against my will. It is then above me, and above all weak and imperfect men as I am. This supreme reason, which is the rule of *mine*, this wisdom from which every wise man receives his, this supreme spring of light is the God whom we seek."

This admirable illustration of the rule of life, from the masterly pen of Fenelon, is worthy of the most candid and scrupulous attention. It at once gives a line by which to decipher the mystical and hyperbolical phraseology of scripture.

and an imperishable rule to measure every sentiment and opinion, which has ever been spoken or written by man.

This divine principle being all that we feel and know of the Deity, we may safely pronounce all other opinions and conjectures, the visionary fondlings of a vain and idle curiosity. For since all our knowledge of matter is confined to its qualities, and of mind to its actual effects, how can we move one step in safety from our actual experience of the operation of this supreme reason, without substituting conjecture for true knowledge.

How idle and impertinent do all those reasonings, or rather wranglings appear, which have been employed to determine, when or how the earth and the planets were created, or whether they were created at all : as though by admitting or proving the creation of the universe, we could obtain a better comprehension of the nature of the Deity. All that is required of man, is to acquaint himself with, and to believe what does actually exist; and to obey no other power, than that which actually torments him if he disobeys, and rewards his obedience with felicity. Those gods and deities, whose existence men prove, by a course of reasoning, and whose being is doubtful or probable according to the number of the testimonies and the nature of the evidence upon which they found their conclusions, or the fertility and vivacity of his genius who manages the evidences, are such brittle and delicate creatures as to require the vigilance of an empire of Priests to keep them in any tolerable shape and consistency. They have no resemblance to that God, whose throne is the heart of man; and consequently those who serve them being like unto them, have no resemblance to the true God.

It is by following the counsel of that supreme reason alone, which anchored the soul of the Abbe Fenelon, that man can receive the impress of the Deity, or be qualified to discharge his minutest duties. Under the conduct of this principle, water baptisms, the washing of feet, sprinklings, traditionary suppers, tritheism, and sanguinary atonements, will appear but the melancholy vestiges of the Romish harlot. And though the time was, when some of these traditions were the badges of apostolic purity and simplicity; yet when they are used by those, who deny the power, the efficiency and the entire guidance of that supreme reason, obedience to which constituted the worth and essence of the apostolic life, they become signs, more ridiculous and melancholy, than those of the merchant, whose extravagance and dissipation has ruined his fortune, drained his stores and left him nothing to distinguish him from the beggar or the vagabond, but his signs and advertisements.





## CELESTIAL MAGNET.

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When articles of religion are proposed to our consideration, it is very desirable to know the precise reasons on which they are founded. For the pleasure we take in the contemplation of such articles, must ever consist in the full understanding of them. The reasons, by virtue of which, the Christian Church has for the space of seventeen hundred years, called certain books and epistles of the Bible, the New Testament, are to me wholly unknown, and consequently, this article of religion is, to me, rather the occasion of disgust, than of pleasure. For neither the persons who composed those writings, the nature of the writings themselves, nor any thing which they contain, afford us the least idea, that they were intended for any thing like a testament or covenant.\* If those writings had been designed for a testament, why were they not put in the form of one? Why do we not see some *one* person standing forth, as the mediator of this covenant; the people acknowledging its validity, and the Deity swearing by himself, to keep it from generation to generation? All this should have been done, had those writings so denominated been a real testament. But so far are those writings from exhibiting any thing of this kind, that they explicitly and unequivocally condemn the very act (*viz.* an oath) by which written covenants could, among the Israelites, be rendered valid.

It is true, that the scriptures speak of a new testament in a very unequivocal manner. But where do they intimate that *they*, or any part of them, are designed for such a purpose? Now, as it must be evident to the mind of every considerate person, that those writings styled the new testament, bear no such character, it is incumbent on us to show from scripture

\* It may be proper to apprise the reader that these two terms, testament and covenant, are used in a synonymous sense, for in the original Greek, the word which is sometimes translated testament, and at others, covenant, is the same, *viz.* *Diatheke*. In the Evangelists, this word is translated testament; and in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, covenant, which clearly shows the lurking prejudice of the translators.

and experience, what is the true nature of that, which the scriptures style the new testament or covenant.

In the thirty-first chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, we have so complete and unequivocal a definition of it, that it seems almost incredible that the Christian Church should have been so grossly mistaken about the nature of it. The prophet commences in this very explicit manner: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their *hearts* and write it in their *minds*. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, saying, know ye the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least of them to the greatest."

Now can any man be so woefully deluded, as to suppose that those writings styled the new testament, answer in any manner to this definition of the prophet! Mark, that it was not to be *according* to the old one, which was in writing; but this is to be its nature, its glory and its advantage; that it is to be imprinted immediately on the heart, and in the mind. This is the idea that Paul had of the new testament. In the eighth chapter of Hebrews he quotes the whole definition of the prophet, word for word, and then adds, "In that he saith a new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Paul here quotes this definition of the prophet to shew the Hebrews that the old testament of Moses, with all its appendages, must be entirely abolished, before the new one could come into full operation, with all its advantages.

According to the sense of these two scripture writers, the new testament stood not merely in opposition to what are called the ceremonials of the law of Moses, to a particular order of priests, and a few other trifling things, which, christian denominations have omitted, but to the whole written covenant of Moses. The main beauty, utility and aim of the new covenant was to consist in its entire freedom from the words, the writings and the definitions of men.

This being its nature, it places all mankind equally in a condition to obtain a knowledge of God. Its whole scope and tendency is to draw the attention of men away from all written laws and creeds, and to fix it on that law which has been ob-



scured, perverted, and almost buried under an insupportable load of statutes, ceremonies and prescriptions.

It was for the introduction and establishment of this testament, that Christ endured such contradiction of sinners, and not (as the church has so long erroneously held) to introduce and establish certain books, which were written, some ten, some twenty, and some sixty years after his death. For if the four histories of Christ, the acts of the apostles, the epistles, and the apocalypse, constitute the real new testament, in what sense can it be called *better* than the *old* one? Or how does it throw down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile? How does it do away the difference between the learned and the unlearned, the bond and the free, the rich and the poor? If the New Testament be in writing, the bond, the unlearned, and the gentile, find in it the same insuperable wall of distinction, as they did in the old one. They find the same necessity for education, for translators, interpreters and priests, as in the days of Moses and Aaron. The unlearned must still remain a slave, a dupe, and a listener to the learned. The poverty of the poor still constitutes an insuperable barrier to his acquiring education enough to read the Bible. He must still hang upon the tongue, the caprice and the hypocrisy of a particular order of men, educated, disciplined, and shaped in every respect to a particular creed.

But according to the definition of Paul and Jeremiah, the basis of the new testament is so broad, that no combination of circumstances, however fraught with poverty, wretchedness or distress, can place a single individual of our species, beyond its saving influence.

Of this testament Christ was to be the Mediator. But if those writings before mentioned are the new testament, there must have been no less than eight mediators; for they were written by no less than eight different persons, two of whom never had the least personal acquaintance with Christ. Those writings are, at best, but a very brief history of some of the most important events, which transpired *during* the *introduction* of the new testament. And the moment they were collected, and proposed as a rule of faith and manners, the new testament, as defined by the prophet, and as confirmed and introduced by Christ, began to lose its influence, and to be buried again under a load of written laws, rules, and articles of faith. And the whole church gradually fell into the adoption of that strange and unnatural medley of Judaism and Christianity, which has ever since been a stumbling block to mankind.



From the nature of the new testament, and from the ideas which the prophet had of it, it is very probable, that many attempts were made to establish it, before the time of John and Christ; and that the innocent blood, the shedding of which was to be laid to the charge of the Jews, was a testimony of the holy endeavours, made to abolish the burdensome and oppressive system of Moses. But it is no marvel, that the old testament stood unshaken for such a length of time, when we consider the amazing weight of authority, which its priests must have gained, over the minds of the people, and the still greater difficulty of disengaging their minds from those trifling ordinances, when once inured to them, by the force of habit, and the almost indelible marks of early education.

But although the abolition of such a system (more oppressive than popery) required the greatest prudence, the profoundest wisdom, and the most unabating magnanimity, the prophet Jeremiah saw that mankind could never be perfect, and that universal benevolence could never be exercised so long as they continued to be governed by written laws. The old testament he saw was but a very imperfect transcript of the pure and imperishable law of nature.\* For although Moses, its mediator, inculcated the great law of love, yet many of his laws were in direct opposition to it. And therefore, when Christ said, he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, he must have referred to the great law of love. For he extracted several laws from the covenant of Moses, and condemned them, as not being true or not perfect from the beginning, though the Deity (to leave entire the agency and accountability of man) had hitherto permitted them to exist. The whole conduct of Christ, together with the manner in which he treated many of the laws of Moses, clearly evince, that he meant not to do away those laws only, which stand condemned in the histories of the evangelists; but that he was equally averse to the whole covenant; as it not only obscured the law upon the heart, but made religion a mere theological grocery, in which the number, the hypocrisy and the extortion of its retailers, became a heavier burden, than mankind were able to bear.

It may not be improper to enumerate some of those laws, which made a very considerable part of the old testament, but which Christ condemned as inconsistent with the welfare of man. In the fifth chapter of Matthew he says: "Again ye have heard that it hath been said, by them of old time, thou

\* By the Law of Nature, I mean the law of pure, uncontaminated nature, or the law of God.

shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, &c." Here then was a bold attack, upon one of the most important laws contained in the civil policy of the Jews. For such was the authority of an oath, among the people of that nation, that no written instrument could be of force without its sanction.

Another law, which Christ condemned, was the enforcement of the law of revenge, which was a prominent feature in the character of all the writers of the first part of the Bible. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Again he says: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.\* But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you."

This opposition of Christ to these several laws of Moses, serves to show in a very plain and satisfactory manner, that however divine the origin of this covenant, and however well adapted to the age in which it was promulgated, it was too confining and oppressive for an age of greater light.

As a further illustration of Christ's persuasion of the imperfection of the rules of the old testament, we may remark his uniform and unconquerable aversion to an established order of priests. To confine the office of instruction to a particular order of men, to particular places and occasions, was in his view a great imposition, and piece of slavery. In contempt of it, he commenced a method of preaching, every way suited to the improvement, the character, and the condition of his age. He took upon him, none of their vows, ordinances, or ceremonies; but still claimed the full authority of a preacher sent from God.

No wonder that this noble personage had not where to lay his head in safety, while he so boldly asserted the original prerogatives, and the primeval liberty of man. The doctrine that the Deity was the only true, infallible and competent legislator for his rational children; that the human heart was the only adequate and imperishable table, on which he could inscribe his laws; that an impartial attention to these inward laws, would enable every one, so to learn his duty as not to be dependant upon the capricious instruction of his neighbour; that national policy, and every modification of it,

\* These laws that were condemned by Christ, may be found in the book of Leviticus, with a "thus saith the Lord."

was only a perverted, partial transcript, an imperfect shadow or type of the pure law of nature ; and that written creeds and ceremonies, and ordinances, only tended to abridge and impair the pure law on the mind—struck too fatal a blow at the interest, the ambition, and the pride of the Jewish clergy, not to induce a return of their revenge. Agreeably to the spirit and genius of this doctrine, we behold him in every place, and on every occasion, regulating his conduct.

As another instance in which he showed the unequal nature of the laws of Moses, I will relate the following, from the second chapter of Mark. “ And it came to pass, that he went through the cornfields on the Sabbath day ; and his disciples, as they went, began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. And the Pharisees said unto him, why do thy disciples on the Sabbath day, that which is not lawful ? ” In reply to his hypocritical accusers, he showed them that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath, like all other days, for the conveniency of man. This conduct of Christ and his disciples is a fair and indubitable example, wherein a written law of Moses abridged the law of nature, whose authority, when felt, must never be sacrificed to the limitations and imaginations of men. So incapable of definition is the pure law of nature, or the will of God, by the human understanding, that men must ever despair of furnishing the world with a written code of laws, which shall not impair the true liberty and strict equality of the human race.

As the last instance in which Christ disapproved of the covenant laws of Moses, I shall repeat a few verses from the 8th chapter of John. “ And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman, taken in adultery, in the very act. And when they had set her in the midst, they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded, that such should be stoned ; but what sayest thou ? This they said tempting him, that they might have wherewith to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote upon the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said, he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it being *convicted* by their own CONSCIENCES, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last ; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, woman. where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ? She said, no man, Lord. And Je-



sus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more."

So far was Christ, in this instance, from complying with the rigid law of Moses, that he was the first to excuse a transgression of it. And notwithstanding the amazing authority, which the laws of Moses had among the Scribes and Pharisees, the inward law here arose in such power, that they were unable to suppress its convictions; or, according to the words of scripture, "they were convicted by their own *consciences*." Christ saw, and perhaps explained to them, the unreasonableness and great inequality of this law. as also the gross inhumanity of bruising this woman to death for committing a deed, which many or all of them might have been guilty of, though they might not have had the misfortune to be detected. They must likewise have seen that bare detection, would be the sole occasion of her unhappy fate.

How much more of the old testament Christ condemned as it was proposed to him by the Scribes and Pharisees, we are unable to say. But if, as he says, his blood was the blood of the new testament, and he had the same idea of the new testament as is expressed by the prophet Jeremiah, he accomplished, what Paul says of him, viz. he took away the first testament, that he might establish the second or the new one.

From these quotations, which I have made from the four histories of Christ, it must, I think, be evident to the mind of every candid reader, that he thought the whole system of Moses had now become an evil to the human species. And as he never offered any system of government to the world, nor gave the least intimation, as we know of, that a perfect, or even a profitable one could be prescribed in writing, we must conclude that Christ thought men had much better follow that system of legislation, which eternal wisdom and goodness has imprinted on the heart.

He did not, as some perhaps would contend, endeavour to bring this new covenant into operation, barely because it was predicted by some one before him, but because it is a matter of eternal right, and its nature and tendency is to produce the greatest sum of happiness. It is a dispensation, which needs not be enforced upon mankind by dint of authority. It discovers at once the greatest reason, propriety and utility, by placing every individual in a condition of knowing his duty in a much more perfect manner, than he could be placed in by all the invention, the learning, and wealth, of Christendom. To be satisfied of this, we need only look into the books of human legislation, and there behold how wofully the



pure law of nature has been mangled, abridged and obscured by the busy invention of ambitious men.

The new covenant of which the prophet spoke is as incapable of definition, as the beauties of nature are of just and accurate description. And the real difference between the new covenant and the old, is no less than that between reality and mere description, which only touches here and there a beauty without giving a view of the whole scene. The rewards and punishments annexed to the new covenant, or pure law of nature, are as well fitted to encourage mankind in virtue and to restrain them from vice, as the beauties and deformities of nature are to inspire them with emotions of pleasure or disgust.

And since national policy and every modification of it, is only a partial transcript of the pure law or light of nature, would it not be much the safest way for mankind to follow the pure original? By doing which they would be able to exemplify, by actual experiment, what they now endeavour to produce by force, fine, imprisonment and death. That savage violence, which is made the present defence of nations and the wretched guardian of private property and civil privileges, is but the miserable offspring of avarice, ambition and pride. It is an enemy to every virtuous principle of the human heart. Its tendency is to degrade mankind and to keep them from the attainment of that perfection which heaven has designed for the completion of their happiness. What are the systems of national policy now in existence, but a kind of half-way mimicry of that inward and imperishable law, which binds men together, and instinctively impels them to discharge offices of humanity and love to each other.\* But to return: We have seen, by what has been said, the true estimate which Jesus Christ put upon the systems, which were current in his day; and the firm persuasion which he had in the propriety, the utility, and the importance of the universal introduction of the new covenant, as defined by Jeremiah and Paul. As a further specimen of the incalculable benefits, which Paul conceived the establishment of the new testament to have, we may review his own words. In the eighth chapter of Hebrews, he says, "For if that first covenant had been *faultless*, then no place should have been sought for the *second*." And then quoting what Jeremiah says of the new covenant, begins to reason with the Hebrews upon it, as

\* Although such, in my view, is the character of most, or all of the present codes of law; yet the present condition of mankind will not admit of their being hastily dispensed with. Positive innocence and purity of soul can alone supply their place.

tho' he understood, that its operations commenced with the ministry of Christ; and that while they, the Hebrews, held to the veil of the old testament, and regulated their conduct by that, they could not expect the new one to have any salutary effect. He considered the old testament a thick veil, which prevented the Jews from taking a just and accurate view of the new one.

But enough has been brought from the Bible to show, that Jeremiah, Christ and Paul, considered the old testament, but a very imperfect type of the new one, for the introduction and establishment of which there was shed such a sea of innocent blood; and that they all considered the new testament, to be a dispensation, in which men were to turn their whole attention to the convictions and approbations of the inward law.

We see none of Christ's disciples holding up the history of Matthew or Mark, as a part of the new testament, commanding people every where to believe in that, as the true word of God; none of them spreading abroad and translating the epistles of Paul and Peter with a zeal indicating that mankind were going to perish without them, none saying, ye must believe in the acts of the apostles, that your sins may be forgiven you. But all this should have been said, if we are to take their writings for the new testament. Those who say that the old testament is a type of those writings, which at present pass under the name of the new testament, use a phraseology no less absurd, than the person who should say that one man was the type of another, or that the book of Genesis was a figure of the book of Matthew, or that the description of Solomon's temple was the temple itself.

But notwithstanding this veil of deception has been fastened upon the mind of the church visible, for such a length of time, it must be evident, that the conduct and doctrines of Christ and his apostles, were a complete verification of that period, which the prophet Jeremiah disclosed as the consummation of earthly happiness. If the other disciples were of like mind with Paul, the question seems to be placed beyond a doubt, that they all believed the prophecy of Jeremiah to be then fulfilling under the power which attended their ministry. And besides, if the old testament began to wax so old in the days of Paul, as to be ready to vanish, by the introduction of the new one, those who revived the authority of the former after the days of the first apostles, must have fallen into a gross error. For as long as the old testament continued in existence, it undoubtedly would prevent the benign influence and saving effects of the new one.

For my own part I am able to see but very little difference

between the Christian who takes the bible for the rule of his life, and the Jew, though the latter appears the more consistent, inasmuch as he acknowledges the full authority of every part of the old testament, while the Christian neither acknowledges the full authority of the old, nor the reality of the new, as it was understood by the prophet, by Jesus Christ and his immediate disciples. The method of educating, settling and paying priests, is nearly the same, as under the dispensation of Moses and Aaron. Those writings denominated the new testament, are so far from supplanting the old testament writings, that they are only made an addition to them; in the same manner as the books of Job, Daniel and Jonah are added. So that, according to the popular idea of the new testament, it is just the reverse of what the prophet Jeremiah defined it to be. For according to the popular idea of it, God has made it, in almost every respect *according* to the covenant, which he made with the Israelites, when he led them out of the land of Egypt. Instead of writing his law in the heart, as he promised to do, he has again written it on paper in the form of biographies and epistles; and instead of that equality of condition, wherein no one should teach his neighbour, we find the world burthened with a set of men, whose whole employment it is to instruct others in their duty to God and their fellow men.

Now, I have no hesitancy in saying, that the popular idea of the new testament is completely the opposite of what the scriptures testify respecting it. Instead of following the great principle of truth, or that convicting and approving power, which is manifest in the heart of every human being, most Christian denominations are idolizing a book, the authority of which was once done away, but has been revived by the intrigue of blind, enthusiastic councils.

When people measure the prosperity of religion by an uncommon multiplication of priests, by a growing fondness for embodying wealth, grandeur and magnificence in buildings for stated worship, or by a violent attachment to a particular book, or any other work of men's hands, they manifest a rapid return toward that melancholy goal of Judasism at which the order of Aaron had arrived, when Christ announced the commencement of the new testament; and told the Jews to throw off their shadows, and to embrace the substance. But as the Jews clung to their temple and its ceremonies, the building and establishment of which were dictated by inspiration, so do men cling to the scriptures, the building or composing of which was in part also the effect of inspiration. When that monument of inspiration became an idol, it was destroyed, and



its votaries dispersed. In like manner may God annihilate that impious attachment, which men hold, or pretend to hold for the scriptures. Are not those, who hold themselves in expectation of a period, when every one shall be able to know his duty without the assistance of his fellow, evidently standing in their own light, while they are unwilling to let go the veil of the old testament, which keeps them from the realization of that happy period?

Those who are wishing and praying for the universal spread of the gospel, but still keep on spreading books, which have once been fulfilled, or which were written for the instruction, and edification of a former age, without the least reference to the present, appear to be very much in the condition of adventurers, who after reaching the shore should expect to get on land without leaving the old leaky vessel in which they had been induced to embark and to endure every species of hardships by the imaginary rewards of blind, unskilful commanders. Notwithstanding all its inconveniences, they have become so inured to the old bark, they think themselves unable to dispense with it even upon a land of perfect safety.

Perhaps some may be in doubt about the manner of writing this law upon the heart, or rather what is meant by *writing* it. It is the opinion of many, that it is to be accomplished by giving all mankind a thorough acquaintance with the scriptures. But God says *I will write this law upon their heart*. He dont say the *priests* shall write it (in their head.) This their opinion is completely the reverse of what Paul has expressed upon the subject, and what would appear the most expeditious and the safest way from the nature of the subject. When the Prophet Jeremiah spoke of a law, that should be written in men's minds, he could not have meant that this law was not already in the mind; but by the writing of it, he must have meant such a recognition of it, such an attention and obedience to it, as would enable them clearly to see its divine origin, the perfect safety of trusting to its authority, and the inestimable rewards of keeping it. But while men are guided by the obscure meaning, or fanciful interpretations of the written laws of Moses, and of the local and temporary writings of the first apostles, their attention must be drawn away from that inward law, and consequently its effect upon their conduct must be exceedingly partial.

The removal of those written laws and those burdensome ordinances, which men have so long idolized, will give their minds the same advantage in perceiving the reality and the efficiency of Nature's laws as the rending of the veil which



concealed "the holy of holies," gave the eye of the Israelite in examining its consecrated furniture. The attention being turned from the mere transcript of Nature's laws, the mind will thereby be prepared to catch their dictates living as they rise.

Attention, says the great Robert Boyle, is to the mind, what a magnifying glass is to the eye. If this idea be true, how wonderfully intelligible will be the inward law, when men shall pay so much attention to it as to detect every mote, which may obscure its glorious light. In the scriptures we see much of the pure law of Nature put into propositions and conclusions, and these propositions and conclusions are received, or rejected according as they are found to agree or disagree with what men have seen and experienced of the inward law of God. So that Nature's inward law becomes a judge and a standard by which men unavoidably pronounce every verbal and written proposition true, or false. This is so obvious a matter of fact, that there can be no question about it.

If the contents of the scripture are above reason and common experience, how comes it to pass that all the religious denominations, without exception, are continually reasoning about them, as though they saw every step of reasoning upon which, the different conclusions are founded? Do not men assent to and embrace the propositions of Paul, from the same evidence, that he received them upon? And does not this evidence belong in nature to these propositions—as much as the evidence of any proposition, in Euclid, belongs to that proposition? Did Euclid have any more evidence of, or any stronger faith in the truth of his propositions, than men now have. But men employ the same faculties of mind in demonstrating the various propositions of Paul, that they do in demonstrating the propositions of Euclid.

What do men mean by what they call the study of theology, or the ransacking of ancient history, if it be not to reflect as they think, meaning, or light upon the words of the scriptures! Why do men spend so much time in deciphering from the records of history, the particular circumstances, occasions, and even *reasons* of every speech and sentence in the bible, if in the nature of things, these circumstances, occasions and reasons had no necessary agency in the production of such speeches and sentences?

Why do our theologians descant so much upon the beauties and the proprieties of the various parts of the bible, while they deny that they know any thing about the nature of that,

which they call miraculous inspiration, and which they say was known only to the scripture writers? The terms beauty, propriety, simplicity and benevolence are relative, and have no meaning when applied to things, actions, and events which are out of the known course of nature. The fact is, that the conduct of our theologians, is in every respect, a downright contradiction to their theories.

That the new covenant, as defined by Jeremiah, was ushered in by Jesus Christ, and in a great measure matured by the preaching and benevolent exertions of the apostles, may be placed beyond the shadow of a doubt, by merely perusing the face of scripture; to say nothing of the flood of argument, that pours in upon the mind from a thousand other sources.—In Paul's epistles, there is a very frequent as well as a very important mention made of the new covenant. In the third chapter of the second of Cor. the subject is thus explicitly introduced—"Not that we are able to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new-covenant, (*kaine*, Diatheeke) not of the letter—or better translated, not of writing; but of the spirit; for the letter, or writing killeth, but the spirit giveth life.—Now it may be asked of what new-covenant were Paul and many others made able ministers. Was it a promiscuous collection of epistles and biographies? No. The man must be most blindly mad, who pretends to such a barefaced contradiction. The language is indisputable, "not of writing, but of the spirit"—that same spirit which Jeremiah says, shall write the new covenant upon the heart. The remainder of the abovementioned chapter is a still stronger proof of what I have said respecting the nature and primitive character of the new covenant. In the 12th verse, Paul proceeds thus: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech, and not like Moses diffident and doubtful, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that, which is abolished. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in the reading of the old covenant, which is done away in Christ. In the close of this verse, the word veil is added by the translators, (which *veil* is done away in Christ) so that the pronoun (*which*) is made to refer to the word veil, an unwarrantable stretch of rhetoricalliberty! But let the translation of this phrase be either way, the word veil as used in this verse evidently means, either the prejudice, which blinded the minds of the Jews, and kept them from seeing the beauty and efficacy of the new testament; or else the old testa-

ment itself. In the following verse the word veil is again used metaphorically. "But even unto this day, when Moses, i. e. the old covenant" is read, the veil is upon their hearts. That veil, which Moses wore through modesty and diffidence, is here taken to represent the benighted, and doubtful nature of the old covenant. Who could imagine from the character of this epistle, that Paul supposed himself composing a part of a book which should be called the new testament: when he himself says, that he was a minister of a testament not of writing, but of the spirit. The man who can hold to such an opinion, ought not to think himself an inhabitant of this age, but as cotemporary and joint-believer with his brother Jew. But I have not mentioned an hundredth part of the passages of scripture, which express the old testament under an idea similar to that of a veil.

That the introduction of the new covenant, as defined by Jeremiah, would be attended with the happiest and most salutary effects, may be presumed from the consideration, that it has been several times partially established by the unremitting exertions of different persons, and has always been productive of great piety and morality. So far as it was introduced and defended by Jesus Christ and his disciples, it was productive of every virtue, which could dignify and felicitate society. Industry and frugality, peace and plenty, were the immediate result of that noble system of legislation, which makes every individual of our species equally a subject and servant of the great parent of the universe. The passions and feelings of those who became subjects to this noble government, seemed to tend to a common centre of harmony. The idea of nation, society and even family was done away; and all became the household of God. Patriotism was swallowed up in philanthropy, and benevolence was the only string that seemed to vibrate in the human heart.

How far this eternal system of right was introduced by Socrates and his disciples, we are not warranted to say; though from the slight account we have of him, we may presume that it had gained such a permanence in Greece at the death of this virtuous reformer, that many years passed away before it was completely buried under the ponderous load of bigotry and superstition which then enslaved that haughty nation.—It was not till after the death of this noble personage, that his countrymen began to perceive the transcendent beauty, propriety and importance of his doctrines. While he lived they thought him an injurious innovator; but when cool reflection came to employ their minds, and the dreadful visage of novelty became more familiar, they began to realize the

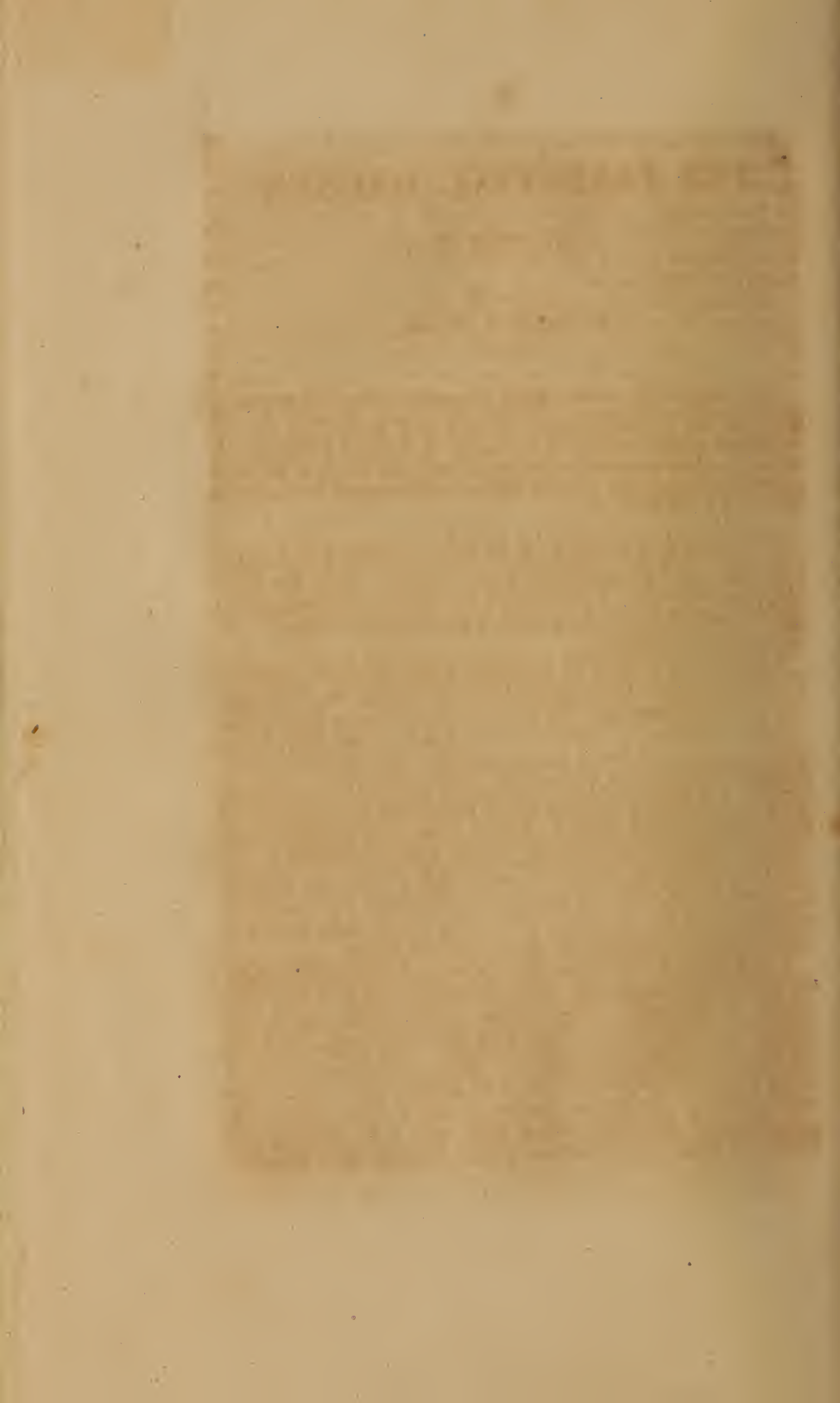


worth of his instruction, by the growing vices and impiety of their youth. They saw, that although he laid the ax at the root of their craft, their vain philosophy, and their idolatry, he was really a benefactor to mankind. The proof that he had an idea of the new covenant, arises from the similarity of his conduct to that of Christ. He opposed the ceremonies and creeds of Greece, as the futile and visionary inventions of hireling men. He taught, on all occasions, and to all descriptions of men, when his good Demon gave him utterance. And as he never wrote any system of religion, or proposed any to the world, we may justly infer, that he wished to leave every man to the guidance of his own good Demon, or power of God upon his heart.

But the best and most indubitable example of the happy effects of the new covenant, is the rise, progress and permanent establishment of the Society of Friends. And although this Society does not appear to be fully under the authority of this new government, yet in their conduct and principles, they have approached so near to it, that the peace, the harmony and the many virtues of the Society may well be laid to their partial avowal of it. In the abolition of written laws and creeds, they have gone far beyond any other Society in existence.—They all pretend to be governed by one great principle of truth, which is either acknowledged or implied in the conduct of all mankind. This principle is that power in the human mind, which is the convictor of sin and approver of good.—The scripture defines it to be a power which “convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” In the commencement of this society, so far as they embraced the new testament, they did it by the shedding of their blood. But their innocence, their patience and their perseverance wore out the malignity, the cruelty, and the artifice of their enemies, and finally enabled them to realize the precious fruits of their wonderful toil.

As they became subjects of this new government, they were freed from the thralldom of priestcraft, with all its slavish appendages. The spirit of war, was exchanged for the mild temper of peace and forbearance. And they are now able to furnish the world with a fair and indubitable experiment of a principle of government, which secures at once the peace, the safety and the happiness of all who acknowledge and obey it.





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BY DAVID B. SLACK.

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The first part of this number contains an analysis of several scriptural terms, such as Comforter, Revelation, Inspiration, Holy Spirit, the Word, &c. and shows that they all are expressive of the same thing, which people mean by the conviction and approbation of Conscience. In the sequel it is shown, that Jesus of Nazareth was the son of Joseph and Mary, and that had the truest history of him come down to us (the history of the Nazarenes) this would have been the only idea among us.

The method of analysis, in all the sciences to which it has been applied, has invariably been attended with the most flattering success. From which favourable circumstance in this method of discovering truth, I am induced to apply it to the subject of religion.

There are a number of scripture terms which the majority of people, consider too sacred even to attempt an investigation of their meaning. To this sacred catalogue belong the terms *inspiration, revelation, comforter, holy ghost, holy spirit, spirit of truth, the word, the gospel, &c.* Now it will be the object of this number, to analyze some of these terms, to strip them of that bold metaphor which is now made the source of so much whim and caprice; and to evince, if possible, from the very origin of these terms, that they were intended to signify the various operations of one simple power, one magnet of divine truth, which is equally as efficacious and operative at the present day as it ever was, and whose influences are unavoidably recognized by every rational being.

The English word, inspiration, is derived immediately from the Latin word, *inspiratio*, which is compounded of the two words, *in* and *spiro*, which make up the verb *inspiro*, to breathe into any thing. This term was frequently used by the Roman prophets, or poets and seers to express a state of mind, which prepared its subjects to disclose events not ordinarily known. In the scriptures it has a more extensive signification. For when Paul says that "all scripture, or writing is given by inspiration of God, he must have included

every state of the mind, which prepared the reputed authors of the scriptures, to write them. The Greek word which Paul here uses to signify the idea conveyed by the phrase *inspiration* of God, is *THEOPNEUSTOS*, a term compounded of *Theos*, God, and *pneo*, to breathe. The literal signification of *Theopneustos*, and consequently of the phrase *inspiration* of God, is the breathing of God. But as no one will be so gross and corporeal in his ideas of God as to suppose that he is a being whose existence depends upon the function of breathing, the question is, what idea did the scripture writers mean to express by the word *Theopneustos*? For unless we can find in universal experience some mental operation, of which this term is an appropriate symbol or expression, the precise definition of it, must forever be unsettled. When an object of sense is made the symbol of a mental operation, it is in many cases very difficult to apprehend the exact point in which the writer conceived that object to resemble the idea he wished to express. For two objects very frequently resemble each other in more points than one, this being the case, when one is made the expression of the other, the idea intended to be conveyed is generally confused and ambiguous. But in the present instance there appears to be but one single point in which the scripture writers conceived the operation of breathing into any thing, to resemble that mode of communication which the Deity employs to express his will to men: and that point is the stillness and composure of the two operations.

There is nothing articulate, nor indeed is there much sound in the act of breathing; and there being nothing articulate in God's communications, the act of breathing into any thing was seized by the scripture writers to express that divine communication which is, in a measure, vouchsafed to all men. But although on a close analysis the resemblance appears to be faint, yet were the term *inspiration* used to express some known operation on the mind, it would be very significant. The word, apprehend, is originally as bold a metaphor as the word *inspiration*, though the former by a constant application to a known, universal act of the mind, is perfectly understood by all who have occasion to use it. But the word *inspiration* as used by those who style themselves Divines, expresses an operation on the mind, which has not been experienced for the space of seventeen hundred years. So that, with these men, the true notion of *inspiration* being lost, as much as the notion of the Egyptian art of embalming is, they make the term



mean any thing and every thing as it will conduce most to their advantage, and best comport with their caprice.

Should the term inspiration be made the expression of those persuasions of duty and convictions of sin, which now so evidently exercise men's minds, and which they have no power to prevent, it would become a faithful servant, and discharge the same office, which it did in the days of Paul and Peter. That men do at present actually experience what, in the days of the apostles, was called *Theopneustos*, may be undeniably evinced from the predicted office of that divine operation. The office of *Theopneustos* (inspiration of God) was to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. But are not people now convinced of the torment of sin, the beauty and propriety of righteousness and of the satisfaction of doing justice? And is this a different and less divine conviction of these things that the scripture writers had? If so the fault is not in man who has no power to convict himself, but in the Deity. But since all men without exception, speak of their convictions of sin, their persuasions of duty, and their compunctions of conscience, we must accept the truth of their testimonies. And while we accept the truth of their testimonies we are unavoidably led to inquire whether these convictions and compunctions of which they all involuntarily speak, and which they attribute to a something called *conscience*, is not essentially and entirely the same as those which are mentioned in scripture as proceeding from immediate inspiration. On a thorough analysis of the scripture phraseology, it evidently appears, that what we call the conscientious, scrupulous man, would have been called in the days of Jesus, the inspired man, the man full of the holy ghost, or the man of God. For as well might we contend, that the whole course of the material world is changed; that the sun shines with a less splendid radiance than it did in the days of Jesus; that the revolution of the planets and the succession of the seasons, are reversed; that the wintry frosts of January were formerly more congenial to the growth of the vegetable and the animal kingdoms than the softening dews of May are at this day, as that the mode of divine communication to man has been changed.

Had Deity commanded the disciples of Jesus to bottle up all the showers that fell eighteen hundred years ago for the purpose of supplying future generations, he would not appear one whit less ignoble, cruel and inconsistent, than he is now made to appear by those men who contend that those fragment writings, falsely styled the new testament, are designed to be a

perfect rule of faith and manners to all men. When the scripture writers speak of any material event such as the rising of the sun, the falling of rain, or the inclemency of the weather, we readily understand them. The reason of which, is, that we see the same events ourselves, and believe them to have been seen in the same manner by all former ages. And shall we accept one half of scripture phraseology in a sense which corresponds to, and expresses the substance of our own experience and affix phantoms, guesses and chimeras, to the other half?

Common sense will tell any man that he must analyze the language of scripture till he is able to construe it according to the good experience of mankind, the only rule by which translators of all ages and nations have been guided in their labours. When therefore we meet with words and phrases which relate to the mind, our first inquiry should be, whether these words and phrases are not expressive of the same kind of mental operations which we have been conscious of, ourselves, but which perhaps we have not regarded as we might have done, or have considered them as proceeding from a source other than divine, and thereby failed of those unspeakable rewards and those deeper and more sublime discoveries, which some before us, have attained to.

We have the same reason for supposing that the Greek word *phos* did not, in the days of Homer, signify that same body of light, which now illumines *our* hemisphere, as we have for supposing that the Greek word *theopneustos* (inspiration) did not in the days of the scripture writers, signify that same kind of operations and impressions which now float almost unheeded through the minds of all men. The inspiration of the scripture writers, it is said, was special and effectual. But any one who reads scripture may see that the speciality and effectuality of inspiration was made so by the attention which its subjects payed to its faint beginnings. So that the only impediment to our having *special* inspiration is the want of that uniform attention and regard which made it special to Jesus and his immediate disciples. From this view of the subject, it is evident that the same power, which convicted Judas of his treachery ; Paul, that it was his duty to go to Rome ; and Peter, that he ought to go to the house of Cornelius, now convinces men of injustice, fraud, ingratitude and falsehood, and approves them for justice, mercy, love and harmony, and is no other than the pure spirit or power of God. And the word inspiration has as much meaning now as it ever had. During the long period from Adam to John, the reputed reve-

later, some individuals are almost continually giving accounts of their converse with the Deity, and making it a very common and natural thing; and should people give up the literal meaning of that amazingly figurative phraseology in which, the views of the scripture writers are couched, they would find that many conscientious people now have the same communications with the Deity, though expressed in a very different language.

The true mode of divine communication is to most people a dead, insignificant, and unintelligible language; and is considered too variable and capricious to be trusted. So that those who would return to a true state of liberty and equality, must first learn the silent, inarticulate, tho' significant and persuasive language of the Deity. Then they will perceive the wonderful significance of that mystical phraseology which has so long been the refuge of mercenaries, and a stumbling block to their supple followers. As the learner of a dead language, by his attention and study, is constantly gaining new facilities in understanding the authors he peruses, so he who becomes an honest, impartial, vigilant sentinel over the operations on his own mind, gradually becomes acquainted with that language which has been nearly lost amid the confusion of contending hirelings. The great veil between men and the Deity, is their inattention to his *mode* of communicating his will and designs to them. And did they toil as hard and pay as much attention to this, as they do to the enchanting notes of priests, they would not appear so pedantic and ridiculous in matters of real religion.

By an attention to the course of nature and its various phenomena, men have for ages been arriving at the most solid and indubitable conclusions. They have felt no want, neither in respect to their competency to investigate truth, or in respect to the subjects of their investigations. They seem involuntarily to go forth feeling armed and equipped for the enterprise. But the moment the subject of religion is mentioned as depending upon experience for any valuable discoveries in it, every head is turned—every mind is shocked; one points to Jesus for a proof of his religion, another to Moses, and another to Paul. With many, it seems to be a thing almost too sacred to be experienced, fit only to be discoursed upon by those who pass the ordeal of some divinity school. But those who have made any considerable attainments in religion, have made them as Jesus himself did, by observing and watching the providence of Deity in their own minds. As the natural philosopher obtains his knowledge of



truth by observing the providence of Deity in the material world, so the true christian obtains his by observing and obeying the providence of Deity in the intellectual world.— And as it is one province of the former to secure the health and salvation of the body, so it is the province of the latter to secure the health and the salvation of the soul. Experience makes the philosopher, experience makes the Christian.

That the Deity, in his various converse with men, ever held it in any other way than by his providence which all men speak of as known to them, I have no idea. His providence in the intellectual and material world is sufficiently plain, intelligible and impressive for the guidance of man. And should men apply the same phraseology to what they observe of the providence of Deity at this present time, as is used by the writers of the scriptures to express what they observed of the providence of God in their day, future generations would regard the writing of our age in the same light as we regard the scriptures. For they, taking our phraseology in a literal sense, would say that they had never seen any such a God who talked with them in an audible voice, who taught those who spoke in his name to say, “thus saith the Lord;” and therefore they would be disposed to have just such a God as the literal meaning of our writings, imported. This is the woful state of most people at the present day.

After this digression I will return and attempt to analyse the word revelation. This term is derived immediately from the Latin word *revelatio*, which originally signified the act of unrolling or unfolding. The Greek word which corresponds to the Latin word *revelatio* is *apocalupsis* compounded of the words *apo*, and *kalupto*, to unfold. The Greeks and Latins did not invent the words *apocalupsis* and *revelatio* to express the divine communications made to the Hebrews, but they had a significant meaning for them in the substance of their own experience, long before the scriptures were translated into their languages. Now if, as Thomas Reid says, “language is the picture of a people’s character, passions and feelings, the Greeks and Romans must have had feelings and mental operations agreeing to these two symbols, *apocalupsis* and *revelatio*. Now as the Greeks and Latins took these two words to express the converse of the Deity with the Hebrews, the conclusion is inevitable that unless they were in some measure acquainted with the same kind of converse, they would not have taken these words to express what passed in the minds of the Hebrews. A little attention to the original sense of the word revelation will suffice to convince any man

that it meant precisely the same thing as inspiration; and that it still has a significant and living meaning in the experience of men. For revelation, in the true true sense of it, does not suppose in the subject of it, positive goodness; it is merely counsel and instruction communicated without any reference to the use which is made of it. Between the unrolling of a parchment which the Greeks and Romans rolled up in the form of a cylinder, and that mysterious providence of Deity, which discloses to men a knowledge of their duty, they perceived a peculiar analogy—for as he who unrolled the parchment (if he understood its language) never failed of obtaining the desired information, so he who is intent upon the providence of Deity never fails of having his duty disclosed to him; whether it be to cry against the wickedness of the people, to relieve the distressed, or to restore what has been fraudulently taken from another.

But the climax of caprice and nonsense is manifested in the use which has been made of the word comforter. Never was there such a complication of systems, such an endless source and variety of conjectures, such an exhaustless spring of fraud and deception as have originated from this mystical word. To describe the different tenets which have been deduced from the supposed meaning of this solitary, unfortunate term, by the busy invention of fanatics, would require the composition of volumes. It has been made an umbrage to every species of imposture; and a covering to more iniquity than was ever committed by empires of harlots. Mahomet, by assuming the office which the literal meaning of this term imported, invented a volume whose whimsical contents are the idols of a mighty nation. Little did the authors who first used the term advocate, think that it would be thus abused; a term used by the evangelist to express the simplest idea in human knowledge, a convicting and approving power which never leaves the mind; and which daily and hourly discharges the office ascribed to it, viz. that of convincing the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

The original Greek word *parakletos* which by the translators of the scriptures was rendered comforter, is made, in general, to mean something very different from what its composition will warrant. The words from which *parakletos* is derived, are *para* and *kaleo*, corresponding to the Latin word *ad* and *voco*, to call to or to solicit. So that the proper and only warrantable signification of *parakletos*, is solicitor or advocate. As a proof of the correctness of this translation, we may recur to the predicted effects or offices of this promised

benefactor. It was to lead into all truth, to convince of sin, to approve of righteousness and of judgment. Now would not a person wholly unacquainted with the Greek language, readily perceive that it is much more naturally and immediately the office of a solicitor or advocate, than of a comforter to lead into truth, to convince of sin, &c. Advocate, being the truest and most significant translation of the word *parakletos* our next inquiry is whether this term, like the two already explained, does not express a matter of common experience, and whether this matter of common experience is not a leading into truth. This expression is one of the highest personifications in the whole scripture. It not only personifies the subject of which it is the expression, but the conduct ascribed to this advocate is a still higher figure, in which the action of the object is transferred to the subject or agent. So that by "the advocate's coming" no more or less is meant; than the candidly opening of our hearts to receive the full impression of evidence. In this impressible state of the soul, the evidence or light of truth becomes a powerful and persuasive advocate. Conviction is felt with the most pointed force; righteousness is perceived in its liveliest character, and judgment is so plain and obvious as almost to enforce its own practice. Truth stands knocking at the door of the heart, with its advocate, evidence pleading for its admission; and comfort awaits those humble followers who yield to its earnest solicitations.

From this analysis of the term advocate, every person of candour will perceive the gross error of exclusively appropriating this term to certain extraordinary operations of the mind, which are conjectured to have been experienced only by the immediate followers of Jesus. If conviction is felt in the minds of any, it is the work of the advocate, or in the language of scripture "the advocate is come to lead them into all truth."

But men have the same power to prevent the pleadings of this advocate, or to put its holy persuasions out of their minds, as the Jews had to put Jesus of Nazareth out of their synagogues; and men too often think this daily and nightly visitor as unworthy their notice as the Jews did Jesus of their temple. The cry of the Jews was, "is not this the carpenter, the son of *Joseph* and *Mary*, whose brothers and sisters we know, and are all here with us." Is not this that poor, humble mechanic, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, and supplies the wants of his suffering neighbours by the fruits of his own toil?



What can such a fellow know about divinity. Away with him from our temple which has been consecrated to the learned and sanctified sons of Aaron. Away with him from our synagogue—he has never been invited to preach—he has never been ordained—he will break up our holy order of priests. Let him be regularly ordained, let him read the law and chant over the psalms of David, let him contend earnestly for the holy order of priests, let him conceal their hypocrisy, and our temples and synagogues shall be open to him. But, holy Jesus, thy neck never bent to all this mummary. So now the cry against regarding our common convictions of duty as a revelation from Deity, is much the same. They are too common things, say the professors of our day, they will lead us out of the favour, the fashions, and the complacency of our priests; they will lead us to be industrious, patient, attentive and, perhaps, to act the mortifying part of Zacheus, in restoring what we have fraudulently taken from others. Surely this kind of conduct, would be too incompatible with that dignity of character, which we must maintain before a gainsaying world. The holy cause of our religion, requires that we should conceal our dishonesty—disown the just imputations of our knavery, and by all means clear up the disgrace of our falsehoods and thefts.

So that we see the true advocate under the lowly name of *conscience*, treated precisely in the same manner as the Jews treated Jesus of Nazareth. But hear the plea of our modern professors, for this horrid reverse of christian faith and manners. “The *times are changed*,” say they. “For us to act, in these enlightened days, like the immediate followers of Jesus, would incur a most insupportable disgrace. If we should follow our common convictions of *conscience*, much of our property, and all our grandeur and distinction which we have obtained (by overreaching and fraud) would be lost; and all the common day-labourers and mechanicks would be upon a level with us. To do as our conscience dictates, at this enlightened age, would betray a weakness which the world would despise. It would lead us into a state of mind, where all our dignity and (affected) delicacy would be forever unnoticed. In this wretched state of things, whoever did the will of Deity, would be our mother, our sister, and our brother, however poor, mean, or disreputable. So altered are the times, that the religion of Jesus would no more comport with the fashions, customs and institutions of this our enlightened age, than our scientifick religion with the superstitious and unlettered condition of Hindostan, or Nigretia! For the

religion of Jesus made every day, a day of judgment, of accountability ; and a day of restoration of all things which might have been misplaced by the avaricious dispositions of men : which heart-piercing doctrine, if taught at this day, would break up all the order and polish of society ; and (shocking to tell) it would make many of our worshipful and reverend clergy appear just as full of injustice, iniquity, fraud and licentiousness, as they, in very general terms, confess to be. How much better is our religion suited to the improvement of our age, than the religion of Jesus. In our religion, the day of judgment, of accountability, and of restoration of all things, is most judiciously placed in another world : in such wise sort, that the specification of our crimes will be wholly darkened and unnoticed by reason of the multiplied confessions about us. So that we shall suffer no disgrace, and shall be sure to share the approbation, confidence, and esteem of the world, so long as we continue in it. And although our priests have not shown us their reasons for placing the day of judgment and accountability in another world, and although they have acknowledged that many things here misdone cannot be restored after we have passed the grave, yet every one must perceive how very derogatory it would be to our present character and popularity, to have every day regarded as a day of judgment. And if our priests are not favoured with what they call *immediate* revelation (which alone can qualify them for so altering the religion of Jesus) still every one sees the *propriety* of shaping it to the manners of the age in which we live. For the traditions of our fathers, the practices and manners of our age being called, in scripture, the powers that be, must certainly conform thereto. Wherefore, to regard the day of judgment as being in this world, would be contemning those very institutions, which our priests say, are the ordinations of Deity. And, although it must be confessed, that to place the time of judgment in this world, would tend greatly to equalize it, and to bring it into a state of great simplicity, innocence and unity, yet this would be breaking up the *positive, dogmatical* institutions of our priests ; and trampling under foot their most holy authority : nay, more, it would be dragging from the desk of lucre, many, who now glitter like stars in the unclouded firmament. Finally, so altered are the times, that there can be no doubt, but that, if another Jesus should appear on the earth, he would admire the improvement which our priests have made in that religion, which Jesus of Nazareth published in the temples and

synagogues of Judea. What encomiums he would pass upon the divine institution at Andover ! Yea, think ye, the holy Jesus would not delight to visit, where every thing is sacred ; *sacred* oratory, *sacred* history, *sacred* musick, *sacred* professors, *sacred* students—where nothing is impious, nothing deistical, but the equalizing spirit of truth. And as for such a man as Peter, he would be so abashed at the depth and solidity of our popular divines, that he would think himself highly honoured, could he but officiate as a sub-deacon, or humble layman, in some of our splendid temples.”

So much digression to illustrate the specious pretences of modern divinity. To pursue the proposed analysis farther, would border so much upon repetition, that it may be well to leave the remaining analysis to the judgment of the reader. I will just notice, however, the strong tendency of the translators of the bible, to give to the Deity all the form, shape and materiality which they could conveniently do, without shocking the common sense even of the most vulgar. The Greek word *pneuma*, is translated sometimes spirit, and at others *ghost*. The word ghost appears to have been introduced with about the same view which the papists had, in introducing into their worship images and statues, viz. to assist the vulgar in forming more solid and comprehensive ideas of the Deity !! But as it would have been too revolting to common decency, to have used the phrase, ghost of God, instead of, spirit of God, the translators carefully avoided using this expression.

From what has been said, it evidently appears, that our popular theologians and professors of christianity, with regard to what is meant by the terms inspiration, revelation, comforter, &c. have run into two great errors. In the first place, they do not accept and treat that as inspiration which is really such, and which is not only true revelation, but is precisely the same with that which prompted Jesus and his disciples to such wonderful acts of benevolence. And, in the second place, they have formed an idea, or image of inspiration, which not being founded upon experience, they have so magnified and sanctified by connecting it with prophesy and miracles (which have no necessary connexion with it) that they have prevented themselves from attending to, and understanding those convictions of duty, which alone can work a way for their salvation from sin. In the language of scripture, “they have forsaken the Deity, the true fountain of water, and have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water.” They have made the Deity a dead, unapproach-



able fountain, and have laid hold of the broken, leaky vessel of scripture to bear about the waters of life. Instead of trying the scripture (that idolized, partial map of Judaism and christianity) by that knowledge of divine providence, which they have gained by their own experience, they pretend to decide upon the character and conduct of Deity, by a few sketches of his dealings. But this is no less a paradox than it would be for a person to contend that the fountains and rivers which meander through this continent, do not belong to it, because they do not, in all their meanderings and courses, correspond with the imperfect maps which geographers have as yet been able to draw. A geography, or a mere description of the earth, is never taken by any man as a standard of judging of the surface of the earth and its various phenomena. The scripture is to the Deity and his providence, what a geography is to the earth, with its various appearances. And, as the peruser of a geography, pronounces its descriptions and maps true or untrue, as they agree or disagree with his previous knowledge of the original earth, so the reader of the scriptures, pronounces them true or untrue, as their descriptions agree or disagree with his previous knowledge of the providence of Deity. To pretend, therefore, that the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners, is not only an absolute contradiction to universal practice, but is as great a piece of madness and deception, as it would be to persuade the people of this continent, that since they have a map of it, drawn by able men, they had better abandon the continent itself, and live upon, and cultivate the map.

If prophesy and miracles are to be the only vouchers of inspiration, we shall be obliged to throw away one half of the scriptures. For neither David, nor Job, nor Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John, prophesied or wrought miracles as we know of. So that the people of their day had nothing at all, but their conduct, by which to ascertain the inspiration of their writings. And the love song of Solomon (with which he flattered and amused the daughter of Pharaoh) is so far from discovering a spirit of prophesy, or a power to work miracles, that, in my view of things, it is almost a miracle that any man of common sense, should think that that song every had the least reference to the kingdom of Deity.

Most of the writings of William Law, of the Abbe Fenelon, and Francis Molinos, have every proof of being truly and particularly inspired, that the scriptures have.

What unaccountable absurdities they run into, who pretend to have all the sympathies, feelings and passions of the scrip-

ture writers, and at the same time deny that these sympathies and holy feelings are produced by following the dictates of inspiration. Can an identity of feeling, views and virtues exist, without an identity in the causes which produce them? Says John, "hereby we know that we dwell in him (Deity) and he in us, because he hath given us of his *spirit*." Here, then, it is testified in the plainest and most unequivocal language, that it is the spirit of Deity, or light of truth, which is to assure men of their union and acceptability with him. But if the scriptures had been intended for this purpose, this writer should have told us so, and not have explicitly declared, that the spirit of Deity was to perform this office. But let our divines shuffle, cavil and quibble as much as they please, in order, to smother the fire of truth, which they dread to have enter the hearts of men, they must finally admit the truth of the following proposition, viz. that, let the intimations of Deity come to us in what manner, or through what means they will, they must still be addressed to our understandings, and we must judge of them whether they are really the intimations, of Deity, or of another. So that if men, at any time, by reading the scriptures, become impressed with a sense of duty to do any particular action, it is not the scriptures that impresses them, but the Deity. The Deity has not made the scriptures his vicegerent on earth, and therefore they are like every thing else, merely the *occasion* of divine intimations.

The papist who wears the cross upon his breast, to revive in his mind the death and sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth, has the same reasons for considering that cross to be of divine appointment, to guide him in his progress of virtue, as the protestant has for considering the bible to be of divine appointment, to guide him in the path of wisdom. The papist considers his cross as holy, sacred and infallible, as the protestant does his bible. And the protestant, who despises the cross, is just as impious and as infidel as the true christian is, who, laying aside the bible as the rule of life, follows the light of truth through all the various modes by which it may be communicated.

The manner in which the meaning of the scriptures, is obtained, and the *real* (not the professed) use which all people make of these scriptures, clearly evince, that so far as they were written in the order of nature, or, which is the same thing, in the order of Deity, they are merely one, and not but one, of the works of Deity. An examination of their properties, will serve to illustrate the preceding proposition.

In the first place, they are an object of sight; and the man

who was born blind, or who has lost the use of his eyes, can never, of himself, be able to read them. They are an instrument of sound, and are capable of as great a variety of notes, as the harp of David. In these two respects, they are like any other of the visible works of Deity; and to a blind or deaf man are of the same worth. They are made of paper, a very combustible substance, and, consequently, like all other combustible substances, are liable to be destroyed by fire.—And the votaries of the scriptures feel as much anxiety and solicitude about the destruction of them, as the Grecians and Romans did, about the downfall of their idols of wood, stone and brass. So that the scriptures, instead of being an anchor to the minds of their votaries, are rather like a tottering precipice, whose expected fall keeps its beholders in constant jeopardy.

But if men were to put a just estimate upon the scriptures, and consider them as they really are, one among the ten thousand works of Deity, all this jeopardy about their fate, would be entirely annihilated. For it is impossible to conceive, that the scriptures were made in any more immediate manner by the Deity, than was man himself. Rivers, and animals, and trees, and birds, and fish, are all the immediate workmanship of the Deity; and they all have some particular meaning, which we obtain by observation and experience, as we do the meaning of the scriptures. Men have no idea, but that rivers were intended for the growth and sustenance of the vegetable and animal kingdoms. But how and where do they get this information? From the scriptures? No. They get it intuitively, or immediately, by an actual view of the objects themselves. Men learn the uses of vegetables and animals from their various textures, colours and shapes, without thinking of any other medium of information upon this subject.

Paul found, from experience, that “the scriptures were *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction.” Other men find from experience, that fire is not only profitable for heating bodies, but even necessary; that rain is not only profitable for the growth of vegetables, but even necessary; that light is not only profitable for seeing, but even necessary. The farmer knows when to plant his seeds, when they come up from the ground, when they need the spade or the rake, when they want rain, when they have too much of it, and when they are ripe for the garner. But how does he know all this? From the scripture? Men are acquainted with what they call health and sickness, pain and anguish, joy and sorrow,



with their various causes and remedies, but how came they by this acquaintance? Men can become philosophers, astronomers, chymists, physicians, philanthropists; they can be chaste, hospitable, sympathetick, and every thing which is good, yet, say some, not christians without the scriptures!!!

The Hindoo considers the waters of the Ganges as the only mediation between Deity and men. He thinks them as much the appointment of Deity to heal men of their sins, as the Christian does the mediation of Jesus by the shedding of his blood. The reason why the Hindoo considers the Ganges as the only mediator and saviour, is, that he has always been told so.

That the waters of the Ganges were given by Deity for some useful purposes, there can be no doubt. But this don't prove that they are the only means of salvation for all men. So, the death of Jesus and many others, and the scriptures which give an account of them, might have been given to former ages for some useful purposes, but this is far from proving that they were intended as the only means of salvation.

This proposition of the Hindoo, that the waters of the Ganges are the only mediator between God and men, will be disputed, and is disputed, by nearly all other nations. But the proposition, that the waters of the Ganges were intended for some useful purposes, will be granted by all mankind. That the bible was intended for the only rule of the life of man, will be disputed, and is now disputed, by five eighths of those who are acquainted with it. But that it was intended for some useful purposes, to those to whom it was addressed, will be universally admitted. Men object to the idea, that the bible was intended for, or is capable of, being a rule of life, upon the same ground, that they do to the idea that the Ganges was intended for, or is capable of, making men innocent and happy.

But instead of there being only one bible, there are no less than four, all proposed as rules of life and means of happiness. The papists have a commentary upon every verse of the old bible, and they pretend to take their commentary as a rule of life. The Calvinists have a commentary upon every verse of the bible, and they pretend to take their commentary as a rule of life. The Arminians have a commentary upon every verse of the bible, and they pretend to take their commentary as a rule of life. The Universalists have a commentary upon every verse of the bible, and they pretend to

take their commentary as a rule of life. Here, now, is a book, which, each of the abovementioned denominations regard as the result of divine dictation. But as each of these sects have a sense of this book nearly opposite to the other, they must either all be in the dark, or three of them at least. Now allowing, as we must, that each of them stand an equal chance of being in the right, their knowledge and hopes of happiness, or heaven, are just about as good as money in a lottery, which gives three blanks to a prize. And the conduct of these different sects, their triumph in success, their disappointment in not being able to get the mastery, their extreme zeal and solicitude for the exclusive advancement of their own systems, and their persecution of each other, clearly evince, that they think religion a mere lottery, which the Deity has made of his creatures, and which will not be drawn till they pass into the next world. The Calvinists hold the matter thus : The Deity has made a great lottery of eternal happiness, wherein every verse of the bible becomes a ticket, which is entrusted to a priest, who, from Sabbath to Sabbath must rehearse its *number*, and descant upon its chance of drawing a prize. The Deity knows when he sells the tickets, who will draw blanks and who prizes, but notwithstanding, sells his tickets all of a price. The purchasers of the tickets are to act just as though they were going to draw prizes. At the day, called day of judgment, the game will be up ; and every man hear the event of his purchase. But people of sound judgment will not embark in such a dangerous policy as this. But notwithstanding I think all these denominations to be grossly in the dark, it is impossible for me to think half so bad of any of them, as they are known to think of each other. I think them all in some measure influenced by the principle of truth, though they are unwilling to yield to its guidance.

Man, to be happy, must have a distinct command for every particular action. No matter through what medium this command comes to him, or how he learns it, provided he receives it before he acts. But the scriptures are not only utterly inadequate for such a purpose ; but, it appears to be impossible that any thing can be equal to it, short of Nature herself, who is always near to inform us of our duty. At the same time, an immediate, particular command of Deity, is in my mind, nothing more or less than a positive sense of duty, which most men speak of, as something very well known to them. Paul says, that he had an angel sent to him to inform him that he must go to Rome, but this angel means nothing more than

a lively sense of duty. When the writers of the scriptures, speak of the spirit giving them utterance, they meant that their utterance was increased by a sense of duty. These bold metaphors ought to be analyzed, and the meaning of them detected, and not thrown away as the result of fanaticism.

Paine, Voltaire, and others acted no part of the philosopher, nor of the philanthropist, in their promiscuous ridicule of the scripture ideas, which they never in reality understood, but only combatted those ideas which papists and protestants affixed to the scriptures. The investigation of truth, was not so uniformly their object, as the fabrication of a building of their own, which, perhaps, was as great a monument of fanaticism as the one they opposed. They treated the scriptures as a piece of imposture solely because, with all their professions of philosophy, they had not patience enough to investigate their true meaning. They took their ideas of the bible as much upon hearsay, as the papists and protestants did theirs. They made use of the same bloody arguments to destroy false systems, as the papists did to build them up. And had the whole world been catholick priests, the guillotine of the illuminati, would have laboured till every head had been severed from its trunk. But to conclude, the omnipresence of Deity, entirely excludes the necessity of our having any other dictator of action. All we have to do, is to learn what the true Deity is, and then to obey his mandates.

Did we ever hear of a king, who, ever, while seated in his own council-chamber, employed an ambassadour to make his speeches, and to transact his business? This would not only be, to the last degree, degrading to a king, but it would be a positive proof of his incapacity to hold that elevated station. Much less, then, does Deity employ commissioners to impart his instructions to men. The presence of any being whatever, precludes the idea of his employing a representative, whether in writing or in person.



## THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

From what has been said, in this number, upon the omnipresence of Deity, the truth of that doctrine of the Calvinists naturally follows, which makes the soul of Jesus of Nazareth mysteriously united to Deity. But at the same time it will appear equally evident, that the soul of every other man is as mysteriously united to Deity as was the soul of Jesus. For if the Deity is omnipresent, he is as closely united to the soul of every man as he possibly can be, and not be that soul. The will of Jesus, as it respects its submission, was, from the history of him, completely reconciled to the will of his Father. In this complete reconciliation, consisted all his superiority above his brethren.

But as the supposed character of Jesus of Nazareth, has been, and still is, made the foundation of the wildest and most unnatural speculations that ever exercised the minds of men, it appears necessary to inquire, what idea they had of his character, who were his original and best informed disciples, who, perhaps, were his townsmen, his neighbours, and his playmates. In the nature and course of things, it would devolve upon such persons to give a true and explicit account of the birth, and early character of one of their number. And from such persons alone should we expect to have a true and warrantable description of a person's character. But without controversy, we find that the history of Jesus, has been given by some one, or more, of a people called Nazarenes : which name implies either, that those who bore it were townsmen with, and consequently early acquaintances of Jesus, or that they held to opinions precisely the same with those persons who lived in Nazareth, and who were acquainted with Jesus and his doctrine.

Mosheim, who was opposed to the sentiments peculiar to that class of christians, called Nazarenes, gives the following account of them. " This body of judaizing christians, which set Christ and Moses upon an equal foot in point of authority, was afterwards divided into two sects, extremely different both in their rights and in their opinions, and distinguished by the names of Nazarenes and Ebionites. The former were not placed by the ancients, in the heretical register ; but the latter were considered as a sect, whose tenets were destructive of the fundamental principles of the christian religion. These

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sects made use of a gospel, or history of Christ, different from that which is received among us, and concerning which there have been many disputes among the learned.\* The term Nazarenes, was not originally the name of a sect, but that which distinguished the disciples of Jesus in general. And as those whom the Greeks called christians, received the name of Nazarenes among the Hebrews, this latter name was not considered a mark of ignominy or contempt."

"Mr. Maclaine, who translated Mosheim's history from the Latin, adds, by way of note, "That the learned Mr. Jones looked upon these two sects, Nazarenes and Ebionites as differing but very little from each other. He attributed to them both, much the same doctrines, and alleges, that the Ebionites had only made some small additions to the old Nazarene system." Indeed, it appears very improbable, that there should have been any material difference between them, since, as Mosheim says, this body of christians, put Moses and Christ upon the same foot in point of authority, even before they were divided into two sects. In what respect, it may be asked, did the gospel of the Nazarenes differ from that received among other christians? Was it not entirely in this, that the former made Jesus the natural son of Joseph and Mary; and who was, therefore, upon a level with Moses in point of authority? The Nazarenes were sometimes called Galileans. "Are not all these which speak, Galileans?" Nazareth was a city in the province of Galilee. Peter was one of those who were called Galileans, and probably was of the city of Nazareth, and an early acquaintance of Jesus. From the peculiar manner in which Peter expresses himself about Jesus, there can be no doubt, but that he thought him the natural son of Joseph and Mary. In the acts of the apostles, he is represented as speaking of Jesus as follows: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you," &c. "Then Peter said, Gold and silver have I none; but such as I have give I unto thee: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk" "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye have crucified," &c. This manner of expression, speaks volumes. Peter of Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth, and Paul of Tarsus, are expressions of similar import; and imply a perfect equality in point of authority. Nor did Peter ever speak of Jesus in any other way than as

\*The reader is referred to a history of Fabricius, who gives a full account of the history, or gospel of the Nazarenes.

a man. Mark was, beyond all doubt, a Nazarene ; he says nothing of the miraculous conception of Jesus, but almost places the question beyond a doubt, that Jesus was born like other men. His account, in the 4th chapter of his history, of the preaching of Jesus in a synagogue of his own town, or country ; and of the questions which arose among the citizens of Nazareth, mean a great deal. " Is not this the carpenter, the son of *Joseph* and *Mary*, the brother of James, and Joses, and Juda, and Simon ? and are not his sisters here with us ? And they were offended at him." Those, who asked these questions, knew Jesus as a carpenter, and they knew also the whole family so well as to call them by name. Would such language ever have been used by people, who believed in the story which is related about the miraculous conception of Jesus ? Any one who attends particularly to the language of Peter, Mark and John, will perceive a great difference between the expressions of these writers, and the expressions of the other writers of the histories of Jesus.

The consideration, that all the first disciples of Jesus, were called Nazarenes ; that a part of them continued to bear this name for the space of two or three centuries ; that they had a history of their leader, which made him a man like themselves, is sufficient of itself to prove, that these disciples of Jesus were in the right, and that those who differed from them were in an error, though they might, in time, have become the greater body of christians.

Is it probable, candid reader, that a class of men among whom were many of the early acquaintances of Jesus ; that a class of men, who had every opportunity of knowing the early character of their leader ; who had nothing to expect but contempt from the nobles and the priests of Palestine ; and whose very name carried in it, nothing but the idea of poverty and meanness, is it probable I say, that such a class of men, should have a history of the origin of their sect, a sect from which all other sects of christians, were derived, and that history, in the most important part of it, be false ? Shall a citizen of Nazareth give the history of Jesus, and that history have less truth in it than the history of Luke, or any other foreigner, who wrote altogether from hearsay ? Shall the course of nature be reversed, in order, to comport with the bigotry and prejudices of a particular class of men ? Shall the fountain be less pure than its streams, which are always liable to corruption ? Or shall the sun have less effulgence, than the smaller bodies which it illumines ? This certainly appears to be the idea of those who would call the history of



the Nazarenes less correct, than the history of Luke, or the one which is erroneously ascribed to Matthew.

It was formerly a matter of much doubt, whether Matthew ever wrote that history which is ascribed to his name; and a little attention to the language of the history itself, will increase this doubt, if not entirely convince us that he never wrote it. How could a person, who was present to all the scenes and events which he relates, avoid telling us, that he saw and heard such and such things? How could a disciple relate the whole story of his master's life, and never once mention himself? Where shall we find a historian, ancient or modern, who relates nothing but what he saw, heard, and handled, and yet, through the whole course of his history, has no such words as I, we, us, and me? Paul, Peter, Luke, and nearly all the old testament writers make use of the five personal pronouns; but we see nothing of this in the history ascribed to Matthew. What unlettered Hebrew who never moved out of his own province as we know of, ever wrote so elegant a piece of Greek history as that ascribed to Matthew? Who, in mentioning himself, ever uses such language as the following? Mat. 9th chap. verse 9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him follow me.*" Here Matthew becomes the *subject* of the story, instead of the writer of it. In the next chapter, we find something equally unaccountable, on the supposition, that Matthew wrote the history ascribed to him. "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; the first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James, the son of Zebudee and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and *Matthew the publican.*" From this language, or any other used in the whole history, we might as well infer, that Simon, Bartholomew, or any other of the disciples wrote it, as that Matthew wrote it. Because Matthew is written over every other page of the history, it by no means follows, that he wrote it. The compilers of the scriptures put this name to it. It was, most probably, written by a Grecian, whose information respecting the subjects on which he wrote, was principally hearsay. And it is very evident, that Luke copied the two first chapters of his history from this. So that there is no difficulty in accounting for the two histories of the miraculous conception of Jesus.

Hearsay evidence had a much greater influence over the minds of men in that age, than in this. That story of the miraculous conception of Jesus, coming through the channel

of hearsay, might have been adopted by a historian with the greatest sincerity and honesty, and still be incorrect. A report of that kind once got up, in that age or in any age, would readily find children, old women, and weak minded men enough to spread it as a truth.

The early part of the lives of most men of distinction, being but very little known, is generally guessed at, and consequently the account of it, among sound minds, have but very little credibility. Biographers and historians, in order, to make out a complete account of the lives of their heroes, seem to feel justified in guessing at the substance of the earlier parts of them. But notwithstanding the want of credibility in those two accounts of the miraculous conception of Jesus, they, through some means or other, have come down to us, while the other twenty-two histories concerning Jesus, have slumbered with the records of a thousand ages. Had the history of the Nazarenes, come down to us, the whole body of popery with its ten thousand branches of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Universalism, now spreading in every direction, would never have existed.

According to Luke, "there were many who took it in hand to set forth a declaration of those things which were most assuredly believed among them," i. e. among the Grecians, for Luke wrote in Greek, and addressed his account to Theophilus, a man bearing a Grecian name. But if the Grecians and Hebrews had even then been of one mind about the character of Jesus, one honest history would have been sufficient. The very reason, therefore, of their having been so many histories written, seems to have been a diversity of opinions about some parts of the subject of their writing. But the plain truth of the matter seems to be about as follows: The Hebrews who were the countrymen and acquaintances of Jesus, believed him to be the natural son of Joseph and Mary. But as their religion began to advance towards the west among the Grecians and Romans, who were full of credulity and wonderfully given to the habit of making their heroes and great ones, the descendants and progeny of the gods, Jesus of Nazareth, was gradually, and, perhaps, innocently, transformed into a God. When Jesus had become so far analogous to the Grecian deities, as to be enrolled among their number, his doctrine would go down with all imaginable ease; and would soon multiply advocates to an uncommon degree. With this set out, the Roman and Grecian converts soon become the most numerous, and consequently engrossed full power to transmit to posterity whatever accounts best suited the philos-

ophy of their age. The histories ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were selected, and the rest thrown aside. As the Nazarenes, or the first disciples of Jesus began to die away, their gospel, gradually sunk into oblivion with them. And in order, for the history of the Hebrews to come down to us, it must have passed through the hands of the Grecians and Romans, who were enemies to it, and consequently would have every inducement to prevent its transmission to posterity.

Mosheim says [vol. I. page 65th] "that the fame of Jesus, had grown so illustrious in the first century, that the emperor Tiberius, proposed his being enrolled among the Gods of Rome, which the opposition of the senate hindered from taking effect." This testimony of Eusebius and Irenius from whom Mosheim takes it, shows that Jesus was not in the first century, made a God, though the minds of some, were already prepared to give him a transformation. It is very probable that Jesus was soon after this made a God; and that this was the origin of Arianism which in time grew up into trinitarianism. Thus we see, in some measure, the steps by which the humble carpenter of Nazareth has in the minds of men become a Deity.

*Errata.*—Page 3d, 16th line from the top, for *that* read *than*.—Page 5th, 7th line from the top, for *expressed* read *described*.—Page 10th, 15th line from the bottom, read *we must certainly*, &c.—Page 12th, 7th line from the bottom, for *every* read *ever*.





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BY DAVID B. SLACK.

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## BAPTISM.

That kind of ware, which is of so delicate a consistency as to require more caution and vigilance to preserve it, than people are naturally capable of, is worse than useless; because it not only occasions a painful and useless solicitude in the breast of its possessor, but a much greater waste of money and time to purchase, and to preserve it against the unavoidable casualties of domestick use, than that which is of so durable a nature as to supersede the necessity of caution in preserving it, and an extravagant sum in the purchase of it. But however great the folly and hazard of this kind of traffick, there nevertheless have been many, of all ages and nations, whose greatest boast it has been to embark all their talents and knowledge, in this eventually impoverishing commerce. In a traffick of this nature, we find employed those theological artizans who are continually manufacturing and disposing of volumes upon volumes of fustian and dogmas, which, in their own language, "are designed to *support*," not to prove, the divine authority of the positive institutions of the bible, and the indispensable necessity of men's coming under the authority of them.

It were almost enough to create a smile in the countenance of wisdom and holiness, to take only a cursory survey of the almost incredible efforts of those worldly watchmen, to preserve, to solemnize, and even to deify, with Romish infatuation, those local and temporary ordinances and institutions, in the adoption and usage of which, the immaculate Jesus exhibited the wisdom of the serpent, in order to preserve the innocence of the dove. A moment's consideration will be sufficient to convince any lover of truth, that that being, who, of all others, is the most condescending, the most tender, and the most wise, does not require his creatures to labour in a round

of useless, and often inconvenient ordinances, the appointment of which proceeded from a species of revelation, which is denied to exist by those very persons who think that there is much religion in the practice of these ordinances, and none without them.

What an impious impeachment of the divine wisdom and goodness, is it for men to pretend that the Deity leaves his designs and commands so much in darkness and ambiguity, as to require that monstrous size of lumber, which now burdens the shelves of booksellers, in order to make them intelligible and obligatory. And much less reason have we to regard those commands as divine and obligatory, about an obedience to which pretended christians have, for the space of seventeen hundred years, been quarrelling with, and browbeating each other to an extent which has surfeited even the worldly mind with their folly and impertinence.

The ordinances to which I chiefly refer, are those celebrated two called baptism and the Lord's supper. Though the latter, I fear, has been rather a supper of the priests, by which they have fattened themselves, while they have emaciated their devoted followers, and drained their pockets of those hard earnings which should have been their support in time of need.

And although the divisions and contentions about these two ordinances, are of themselves sufficient to prove that they are to us neither divine, nor obligatory, yet other proofs may be necessary to convince those who have let priest-craft, not religion, take such a strong hold of their minds, as to disenable them from regaining their liberty.

In the first place, I shall examine the grounds on which baptism and the supper are practised, and show that these grounds are local and particular; and in the next place, show that another ordinance, which is much more plainly and positively expressed in the scriptures, is, and has been, omitted for several hundred years, without the least compunction; and has not even been considered a command divine and obligatory. Which inconsistency is sufficient to prove, that the two former ordinances are too nugatory to employ the attention of mankind.

The ordinance of water-baptism is said to have originated with John, whose dispensation formed the middle link between Judaism and Christianity. In the country of Palestine, where the temperature of the atmosphere was so uniformly mild and moderately fervent as to give its pure streams a temperament fitted to refresh and invigorate the body, without



endangering its health, immersion was a very proper emblem of that tranquil, contented, and happy state of mind, which is the reward of the truly righteous. We have no authority for supposing, that immersion was used merely as an emblem of repentance, as is generally supposed. In that country, it was of positive utility to the health and cleanliness of the body. The waters of certain rivers and springs, were found, by experience, to be effectual remedies for many troublesome diseases. So that baptism was not in its origin a mere dead work, or positive institution, and, consequently, of no avail to the person upon whom it was administered. It bore no analogy to many of the ordinances of Moses, the use of which Paul considered as a dead work, and, in the name of God, demanded a turning from them. Had there been no immediate and positive utility in the practice itself, it is more than probable that baptism would never have been thought of; or had the propagators of christianity originated in some more northern climate, this ordinance would never have arisen to perplex and bewilder mankind. It appears to be a mere creature of the climate of Palestine, fostered solely for its use.

But the reason, which those who practice it, give for so doing, is, they say, because it is a divine ordinance. Yet should most of them be asked why it was a divine ordinance, they would say, because we practice it. But as these people hold that all the actions and commands of John, were divine, I presume that they will join with me, in the opinion, that there was not any thing more peculiarly divine in his baptism, than in any other of his practices, such as relieving the distressed, doing justice and confessing sin, all which are very lively emblems and signatures of repentance. It is said that John wore a leathern girdle about his loins; and that his meat was locust and wild honey. Can any one doubt, but what these were as divine ordinances as was his baptism? They most certainly had more utility in them, and are much more significant emblems of innocence and purity of heart. And for aught we know, it might have been a very prominent doctrine in the divinity of John, that all his followers should wear a leathern girdle, and eat nothing but locust and wild honey. For the scripture says, that we have not a history of a thousandth part of the things that were done in those days. I have no doubt but that John thought his leathern girdle, his locust and his wild honey, equally, if not more, indispensable than his baptism. For, a girdle must have been a very commodious thing in the journeys and travels of that unparalleled

philanthropist. And his locust and wild honey made him a very wholesome and cheap food.

I recollect of once seeing a very simple, honest, old, baptist preacher, who wore a girdle, in imitation of John (though not a leathern one, perhaps that would have been rather too wide from the fashion of the times) and whether he thought his girdle, or his baptism, the most divine, or of the most importance, I am unable to say, though doubtless he considered them both to be equally of a divine origin. This man ate neither locusts, nor wild honey; for which palpable omission he had a very good excuse—these articles happened not to be a very plenteous luxury of our American climate.

It is very easy to be seen, that had the plan of nature been so ordered as to have had but one climate upon the whole face of our globe, we might have imitated John and Jesus, in many more equally important respects, than we are now able to do. Water, bread and wine, are the natural productions of all warm climates. From which circumstance alone, I think these articles to be so frequently regarded as divine ordinances. And so they are divine ordinances, in a very important sense; for every good and perfect gift like these are from God, immediately from him. Rain, and snow, and raiment, and bread, and wine, and milk, are as immediately from Deity as the inspiration of Paul was; though for thousands of years, they have been the common sustenance of the human species, as well as of thousands of other beings. These invaluable productions are all divine ordinances, but they are no more divine at one time than at another, at one place than at another, on Sunday than on Monday; and they are no better emblems in one quarter of the globe, than another. The same Deity that produces them, administers them impartially to all his creatures, to the Hindoo, to the Bramin, to the Arab, and to the Christian. O the unbounded goodness and mercy of that being who loves, preserves, and truly regards all his creatures!

Water, and bread, and wine, are as much representatives of the resurrection, death and sufferings of Paul, and John, and Peter, as they are of the resurrection, death, and sufferings of Jesus. They are the common provisions of Deity. Nor did Jesus wish his posterity to sympathize with his sufferings, any more than with the sufferings of his brethren, male and female. For he and his companions, bled, and laboured, and died in one common cause, the reconciliation of an alienated world to Almighty God. They were all divine mediators

and saviours. For, says John, "let him know, who hath converted a sinner from the error of his ways, that he hath *saved* a soul from death." In a word, the book of life is written out of the common blood of the saints.

But what gives John's baptism, a peculiar validity and authority among the professors of our day, is, that it was submitted to by Jesus, though John himself says, that the baptism of Jesus, or the baptism of the principle of truth, was of a nature far transcending, that of water. As much as to say, that he had just mellowed the ground a little, by giving a lively similitude of that baptism, which was to save the world from sin; and to compose that mysterious key which alone can open the door of the kingdom of God. It is very certain, that the use of water baptism, lost its authority soon after the death of Jesus. And whatever estimate Jesus might have put upon the baptism of John, it is said that he never baptized any himself. Perhaps, it would have been as well for his disciples to have imitated their master, in this respect as well as in any other.

To reason fairly and conclusively upon these things, we ought to be perfectly acquainted with all the previous, concomitant, and subsequent circumstances of the ministry of John, of Jesus, and of the apostles. Were we in the actual possession of all the information of which the lapse and waste of time have deprived us, we could tell very easily whether we ought to wear John's leathern girdle, or to practice his baptism or both, or to omit them both. But since we have but an epitome of what was transacted in the time of John, we must make the best of what we have, by availing ourselves of all the ascertainable facts, and by founding our scripture conclusions solely upon them. From what has been said, it appears, that the ordinance of baptism, would not have been introduced, but for its positive utility, and the mild nature of the climate of Palestine.

The frequent practice of immersion among the Jews very naturally suggested to John (who was in a temper, to make a moral upon every thing which chanced to meet his view) the peculiar similitude which it bore to that mental state of purity, which characterizes the heart of the righteous.

But water baptism is said to inherit its divinity from several other sources. It may be well to observe here, that when people contend, that baptism is a *divine* ordinance, they probably mean, that it being once commanded or permitted by God, it is, consequently, universally and eternally obligatory. But this is one of the absurdest ideas, that ever was



imposed upon mankind. Paul was commanded to go to Rome, and Peter to visit the house of Cornelius. But who is fanattick enough to pretend, that these commands are at present obligatory upon mankind? The ordinance of water-baptism was as much a particular command, if commanded at all, as either of the above mentioned; and is no more obligatory upon any person now, than those given to Paul and Peter.

But it is very easy to perceive the reason, why those commands which were given to men eighteen hundred years ago, are thought, by some, to be obligatory upon us. It is because many of these commands are of so general a nature, as to admit of a pretty general practice, and not because they were ever intended to be obligatory upon any, but those who received them.

There are several scripture phrases which are accounted, by some, as indubitable proofs, that baptism was intended to be perpetually obligatory. One of them reads thus: "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Here the word water is very intimately connected with the word spirit, and is supposed to mean the element of water, as much as the word spirit does the power of God. From whence we see that the bare circumstance of juxtaposition is supposed to give water baptism, a certain portion of divinity. But we have as much reason for supposing that the word water, in this place, is synonymous with the word spirit, as that, in another place, the word fire is synonymous with the phrase holy ghost. "He shall baptise you with fire and the holy ghost." In the scriptures, an idea is frequently expressed several times over, in order to give it the more force. This is done, sometimes, by repeating the same word, as where Jesus says, "verily, verily;" and at others by using synonymous words, or words in a synonymous sense. But bigots are ever scrupulous in giving the language of the bible as much again meaning as it ever had. They stuff the words of the bible with their own idle notions, and then call them the notions of Deity, because they are expressed in such sacred language. In the two verses following the one I have just quoted, the word water is omitted by the writer as superfluous though the same idea is continued. "That, says the writer, which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is *born* of the spirit, is spirit." The word spirit alone answers, in this verse, to express all that is necessary in order for a man to be born again. But had the element of water been referred to, by Jesus, he

would have repeated the word, in the last quoted verse. Another passage, supposed to favour the practice of water baptism, is contained in the last chapters of Matthew and Mark; where the same idea is differently expressed by the two writers: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that [only] believeth not shall be damned." But in this verse, as in the others, it is evident, that the words "believeth and is baptised" mean one and the same thing. For in the last clause of the above quoted verse, the words, "is baptised," are omitted, and the same idea is expressed, by the single word "believeth," which was expressed in the first clause by the words "believeth and is baptised." But had the words, "is baptised," referred to water baptism, and not to the baptism of the holy spirit, they should have been repeated in the last clause of the verse, which only says, "he that believeth not shall be damned." If a person is to be saved from sin by believing in the truth and by water baptism in conjunction, he ought not to be condemned barely for not believing, but for not believing and the neglect of water baptism together. For if belief and water baptism are equally the commands of the Deity, disobedience to the latter is just as criminal as disobedience to the former.

It is very worthy of our notice, I think, that almost every practice and ordinance of the Jews is made use of, by Jesus and his disciples, to express the operation of truth upon the mind. This manner of expression had a wonderful tendency to nullify the superstitious notions and rites of the Jews, and to impress upon their minds, truth itself. The baptism of John is evidently used in several places in the form of a metaphor to express more fully to the people of that day, the principle of truth. Says Luke, in his acts of the apostles, "John, indeed, baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the holy spirit not many days hence." In the last clause of this verse, the word baptized, which literally means immersed in water, is used to signify an operation of Deity upon the mind, convincing it of sin, and bringing it into a state of peace. Had this verse said, that Moses practised circumcision, but ye shall be circumcised in heart, and in mind, professors of christianity would have thought it a sufficient warrant for laying circumcision aside. And in my mind, this verse in the acts, clearly conveys the idea that Jesus considered the baptism of John in the same light as he did the ceremonies of the Jews.

What Paul says, in this same book, amounts to a full proof that baptism by water was then about to be laid aside. "And Paul finding certain disciples, he said unto them, have ye received the holy ghost,\* since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any holy spirit. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized, and they said, unto John's baptism. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." What is here said upon the subject is sufficient to convince any candid person, that Paul knew of no other baptism but that of the holy truth. The question, "Unto what then were ye baptized," together with the answer of these disciples, show that they were rather nominally disciples than real ones as yet.

But another, and, perhaps, the most weighty argument in favour of John's baptism, is drawn from the circumstance, that it was practiced by some of the disciples after the death of their master. But any person of consideration, will see that merely the death of Jesus, made no alteration with respect to the fulfilment, or abolition of the Jewish ceremonies, as well as all other ceremonies, which come to an end, only as they are perceived to be dead and useless works. The rites and ceremonies of the Jews, have not even now come fully to an end, although Jesus has been dead for many hundred years. The Jews remain a distinct people, and will remain so, till they become convinced, that they are upon a level with all other people in point of acceptability with God. The death of Jesus, did not do away circumcision, and several other of the Jewish ordinances, even among his most immediate disciples: for they were practised, in several instances, with good conscience. It is true also, that water baptism might have been and undoubtedly was, in some instances, practiced after the death of Jesus; but these instances, it will appear, were altogether among those, who, like Apollos, had not been fully let into the simple nature of the gospel, and, therefore, they were not as yet prepared to lay aside a practice which was sanctioned by so divine a personage as John.

It is certain, if Paul is to be credited, that he never administered the baptism of John, but in three instances, which he very particularly enumerates. By way of reproof to the Cor-

\*This translation of the words *agion pneuma* appears to me to be a species of imposition upon the multitude. For the English word ghost signifies some visible appearance, which goes and comes at certain times, when no such thing is meant by the Greek words as used in this place. The translation should be holy power, holy truth, or holy spirit.



inthians who were then quarrelling about baptism, he says, "I thank God, that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanus, besides I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." By this it seems, that Paul had long since seen that water baptism was a superfluous, unnecessary thing, and had, therefore, omitted the use of it. He had passed beyond this into more sublime and delightful views of the gospel, which he was the better qualified to preach, by reason of his entire disengagements from all the appendages and thralldom of Judaism. But if Paul could preach the gospel, in its truth and purity, without the use of water, is there not as much safety in following his example, in this respect, as in following that of Philip or any other of the apostles who did use baptism, but who, in consequence of it, fell into contentions and disputes, thereby losing their liberty? Paul says, that he was sent to preach the gospel; if so, and he truly obeyed the one who sent him, he did not preach as some now do (who pretend to be sent) that men must be immersed in water or sprinkled with it, in order, to be true subjects of the gospel, and partakers of all its advantages.

In this, as well as in all northern climates, there are several positive objections to the practice of immersion. One very important objection is, that the similitude which, in warm climates, immersion has to a calm, contented and benevolent state of mind, is, in this cold region, entirely lost. What similitude can there be between the mental state of that person, who has entered the kingdom of peace and righteousness, where sorrow, and *sighing*, and pain, and *anguish* are fled away; and an immersion (as is frequently the case) into some frosty, chilly pond, river, or sea? The mind of the spectator is immediately shocked at such a scene, and involuntarily pronounces it a much fitter emblem of madness, insanity and the most violent emotions of distress. Instead of cleansing, refreshing, invigorating, and bringing the body into a temperament corresponding to that of the peaceful mind, it benumbs, chills, and affects the whole system, in such a manner, as very often to raise the sympathy of spectators, almost as much as though the person had thrown himself upon a funeral pile. In a word, it is rather a signature of death than of life.

And what is equally strange, is, that it matters not, with the advocates of baptism, whether the water be salt or fresh, cleansing or the reverse, a river or a pond, provided they

come to what may be called water. A few years ago, there was, in the town of Attleborough, an immersion by a baptist priest, which, for vulgarity and scandal to all religion, equals any thing related in the annals of Hindostan. The place selected for the display of this fancied representation of the new birth, was a nauseous, filthy goose pond, in circumference about four rods, in depth, perhaps, three or four feet, environed with mud about ankle deep. About this pond was gathered a multitude of people, some shocked at the indecorum and gross extravagance of the tragedy, some almost exhausted with excess of laughter at this climax of incongruity, while the rest and more sedate were employed in singing a most clamorous canto of promiscuous ascription to the Deity, in order to preserve any tolerable equilibrium between positive lewdness and a decent sobriety. Meanwhile the priest was labouring to convince his audience, of the analogy between the transaction in which he was then engaged, and the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. But the best that can be said of this farcical, squalid scene, is, that the nauseous, filthy goose pond, was a pretty just emblem of the head and heart of the priest, if not of the conversion of his disciples. When religion comes in such clothing as this, men of sense and candour, will be apt to suspect it. Men naturally expect to see a truly righteous man in the possession of a "mouth of wisdom, which the world cannot gainsay." He that hath not such a mouth, had better be silent, in religion, till he has it given him. Without this, whatever a man may say in defence of religion, will only tend to undermine it in his own breast, and prevent it from taking root in the breast of others. I have not given the above narrative to sport with the sincerity, or to shock the innocent prejudices of any one, but to show that such conduct has nothing to do with the kingdom of wisdom and holiness. But to return : What, in this climate serves to heighten the dissimilitude between immersion in water, and the temper of the truly reformed man, is, that plunging is frequently an injury to the health of the subject. It is perfect folly to pretend that a delicate female is not exposed to the most imminent danger in going into a cold frosty river; and after it, walking the distance of a quarter, or half mile. The common maxims of prudence, which nature inspires us with, rise up, in our minds, and involuntarily condemn such an unnatural practice. The advocates for plunging, ought to close their mouths, and seriously to question the consistency of their compassion towards the heathen, before they proceed to pre-

scribe a remedy, for those who are only infected with a common malady.

I have hitherto considered water baptism under the idea of immersion, or plunging, which, without controversy, was the only mode in which it was practised by the disciples of John, its reputed author. But some sects of christians, for the sake of keeping up at least the semblance of prudence, decency and propriety, have instituted sprinkling and pouring instead of plunging. But there is such an idea of smallness and disproportion even in this mode, that I believe its advocates think it quite a cross to practice it before men of sense. Actions which are at variance with good sense, will always meet with crosses, without ever obtaining the crown, or even the title of wisdom. When Jesus says, "be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," I understand him to mean real wisdom and harmlessness, which are superiour to scorn, sneers and ridicule; such wisdom as will approve itself to every man's understanding; and such harmlessness as will be loved and admired among all classes of people. But whether the practice of water baptism makes any part of this wisdom, I shall leave to the consideration and judgment of the reader.

## THE SUPPER.

This institution, or ordinance as it is sometimes called, though trifling, in its nature, has been made the most important, nay dreadful, in its consequences of any thing of the kind recorded in the gloomiest annals of man. And the single consideration, that it has become a continual evil, is sufficient of itself to show, that it can be no longer divine, or, in other words, that its celebration can no longer meet the approbation of Deity. The Jewish passover which was celebrated very much in the same manner, in which the supper now is, was probably an institution of sobriety in the commencement of it, but in time it became a scene of idleness and dissipation. The lapse of time, had worn away from the minds of the Israelites, the impressions made by that event, for the celebration of which the passover was instituted. To turn away the minds of his disciples from the observing of this feast, as the Jews did, Jesus proposed to them a remembrance of himself, or rather the principle of truth as their object, when, in compliance with the Jewish law, they should meet to celebrate it.



But such is the nature of the mind and body of man, and such the constitution of the world, which we inhabit, that not only institutions of this kind, but of every kind, in time, expire: or they become subjects of dispute, contention and frequently scenes of vice, and are consequently laid aside for the sake of truth and harmony. The supper, like the passover of the Jews, is the occasion of division, animosity and hatred among different denominations. True wisdom, therefore, should lead people out of the practice of it.

A progress, in wisdom and virtue, necessarily supposes a continual change, in all the exterior means, by which we arrive at happiness. An institution affording the happiest entertainment to man in one degree of virtue, becomes burdensome and disgusting when he has reached a higher degree. Upon this point, any tolerable knowledge of the nature and history of man will be sufficient to satisfy us. The institutions of the Jews, however wise and appropriate in their origin, flourished but for a season, and in a great measure, expired. The histories of Persia, Greece and Rome, exhibit a similar rise of a multitude of literary, political, and religious institutions, all of which had their season of utility, of indifference, and of evil, and then were laid aside. No reasoning, however powerful, no exertions, however great, can long prevent such changes from taking place. First comes the blossom; then the fruit, then the falling of the leaves. The young reptile knows not that it shall ever shed its coat, but feels contented with it, and defends it till it begins to loosen and become tattered, then the little creature perceives the propriety of throwing it off. It is something so with people who are bred up in the practice of a multitude of ceremonies and rites. They choose to continue in them, and to defend them, till an unexpected growth in wisdom and virtue, has prepared them for a change.

The celebration of the American independence, once to many almost inexpressibly interesting, has become nearly indifferent, and probably in time, will become such a scene of idleness and dissipation, as to be reprobated by every man of virtue and wisdom. The celebration of the supper by the papists, was a continual occasion of animosity and hatred among the different orders of them, and so it is now among the protestants. These evils ought to be regarded as faithful messengers sent to announce its fulfilment and entire abolition. Wherever there has been the greatest prevalence of this kind of institutions, there has invariably been the least virtue, equanimity and charity. The first celebration of the

American independence was attended with a great deal of gratitude and mutual good will, but now it is regarded merely as a season for the display of talents and parade. Every one must see that nature herself works this change, and that too for the best interest of the human kind.

One pretty uniform evil attending these institutions, is, that people get into the habit of confining almost their whole pleasure to the celebration of them. The intervals between the seasons of celebrating them, become painful, and, with the youthful part of a community, are often sources of extreme anxiety. They take the minds of young people away from their daily concerns in which they should learn to be happy, and dispose them to contemplate distant pleasures; against that admirable maxim of scripture "be not solicitous for the morrow." And, although the supper is an aged institution, and the object of its celebration so far concealed by the ravage of ages, that, with most of its advocates, it has become tasteless and indifferent; yet, when young people first commence a celebration of it, its novelty affords them not a little entertainment. But its novelty soon wears off, and they are surprised to find themselves so indifferent to what once afforded them entertainment, and to which they looked for a perpetual source of pleasure; little thinking that Nature had wrought this change for some useful purpose; for the purpose of letting them pass on, to some greater and more useful attainments. And although the bitterest weed may become sweet, by frequent and uniform use, the celebration of the supper, has not even this advantage. It is one of those lifeless, deadening kind of works for which Paul so frequently reprov'd the Jews. To celebrate it according to the supposed design of the institution, requires a stretch of the imagination, which but few are capable of, and those few must be unable to endure so bold a flight for any length of time.

The papists who painted Jesus of Nazareth upon a canvass, with his pierced side and transfixed hands and feet, exercised much more judgment, in the celebration of his death, than protestants do, who only use so faint a symbol of his death and sufferings, as a small slice of bread and a cup of wine. Meat would be a much livelier symbol than bread, and would be found to be an article much more general among the different inhabitants of the globe.

Bread and wine are not the growth of every climate; so that when the protestant, or catholick religion, is introduced into a climate destitute of these articles, something else must be substituted. This consideration proves that

this institution, like water baptism, is the creature of a particular climate.

But the ordinance of the supper never was a positive institution. It naturally grew out of a certain occasion upon which Jesus met with his disciples. I will give the account of the origin of this institution, in the words of the history ascribed to Matthew. "Now the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover. And he said, go ye into the city, to such a man, and say unto him, the master saith, my time is at hand, I will eat the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when even was come he sat down with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." From this description, I ask in what did this supper differ from any supper, among the Jews? Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them, and told them to eat it." At the same time, he signified by this, that his body was soon to be broken somewhat in the same manner. The analogy between the two things could hardly help suggesting itself. He then pours out the wine, the common drink of the table, and told them to drink that. For his blood was soon to be poured out in like manner.

In the history of Luke, Jesus is reported to have said, on that occasion, "This do in remembrance of me." But neither this clause, nor any other part of the account, conveys the least idea, that the disciples were ever after that, to do it in remembrance of him. When the supper is mentioned in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, the words, "as oft as ye do it, do it in remembrance of me," are added. Jesus at a certain time, told two of his disciples to go into a village over against them, and bring a colt which was tied there. Now because Jesus gave his first disciples this command, is it therefore obligatory upon us? But if one command given to his first disciples is obligatory upon us, I see not why all even the most local and particular. Since all those commands were given to the first disciples, what rule shall we have to inform us what ones are obligatory upon us, and what void of obligation?

In all the *positive* institutions of the scriptures there is a penalty annexed to the neglect of them. Those who did not



keep the passover were to be punished with death. But we see nothing of this kind, annexed to the neglect of celebrating the supper. In all the institutions of Moses the time of their being kept was specified; they were to be kept forever. But Jesus said nothing to future generations; his commands were confined to his immediate disciples.

But what shows the greatest inconsistency of papists and protestants, is, their neglect of an ordinance which, according to the scripture account of it, stands upon a much firmer ground, than either baptism or the supper. I refer to the washing of feet. According to the history ascribed to John, it was after this same supper of bread and wine had ended, that Jesus gave his disciples an example of washing each others' feet. The account reads thus: "*Jesus riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. When he had done washing their feet he says to them, 'I have given you an example, that ye should do, even as I have done to you.'*" And when Peter objected to having Jesus wash his feet, Jesus said unto him, "*except I wash thy feet thou hast no part with me.*" From this account, it will be seen that the washing of feet, is much more explicitly commanded, than either of the other ordinances. And certainly the washing of feet, is fully as much an emblem of a clean heart, as plunging or sprinkling is; and it is capable of a much more general practice.

The argument, that baptism and the supper are mentioned as having been practised after the death of Jesus, is much stronger in favour of the washing of feet. The supper is mentioned but once after the death of Jesus; and the washing of feet once. In Paul's instructions to Timothy (1. Tim. chap. 5) the washing of feet is made one condition of a widow's being taken into the society of christians. "*Let not a widow be taken into the number under three score years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the disciples' feet; if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work,*" she may be taken into the number.

Now I ask what kind of deference to the authority of Jesus, that is, which says to him, We acknowledge all thy institutions and commandments to be obligatory upon us, and that it is impious and even blasphemous to disobey them, but still

we will *practice* just such ones as we have a mind to. It is true, that the practice of washing feet, in the present state of society, would be rather too indelicate for that class of men, who wish to be thought eminently modest and reserved. But wine is a very fashionable drink ; and bread a very fashionable article of food. Sprinkling too is quite a modest and delicate manner of baptizing. These inconsistencies show great insincerity, and have become a matter of note among the greatest and best of men. The more these ordinances and institutions are varied to suit the fashions of the times, the more ridiculous do their votaries appear, and the more disgusting will their religion be, in the eyes of candid and virtuous men. Says the poet

“ Fit means and ends make wisdom,”

And I would add, that inconsistencies make folly.





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